

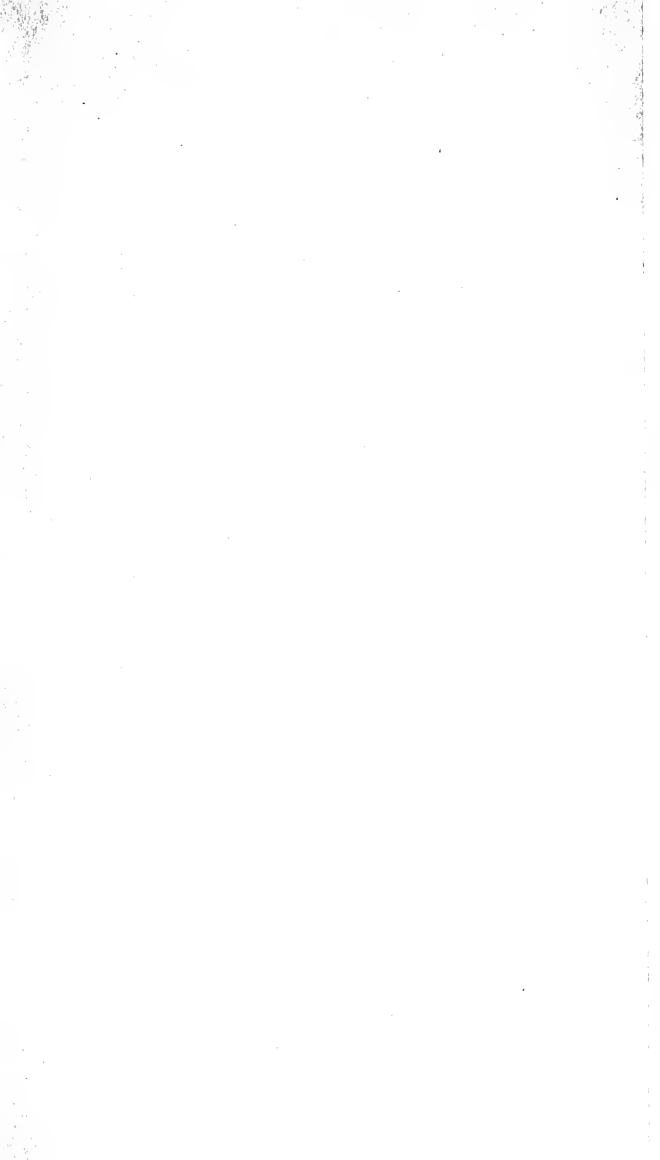
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ZIA

PATRICK



A
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING PRAYER,
AND THE FREQUENTING
DAILY PUBLIC PRAYERS.

BY
SYMON PATRICK, D.D.

Sometime Lord Bishop of Ely.

EDITED BY

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE Volume in the Reader's hands, although complete in itself, may be looked upon as an appropriate companion to a Treatise on Repentance and Fasting, which has been recently put forth by the same Publisher.

Both works are from the pen of Bishop Patrick; both were written in support of principles and practices which, of first-rate importance in themselves, were, nevertheless, gradually falling out of sight in his day; both are characterized by the same dutiful love of the Church, and the same desire to inculcate a

strict obedience to her ordinances; both are designed to lead men to the "old paths" of Catholic truth, the "good way" of Scripture, and Scriptural antiquity; and both (if we may judge by the number of former editions) were instruments of recalling God's servants in a former age to the discharge of duties, towards which the popular religion of the time seems to have been indifferent.

As regards the former of these treatises, no Churchman, perhaps, will be found to think its republication unnecessary, since if ever there was an age which had need to be reminded of our Lord's exhortations to mortification, self-denial, and the taking up our cross "*daily*," that age must be our own, seeing that in all classes of society, luxury, and self-indulgence, are made the very first objects of existence.

But with respect to the latter treatise,—that, namely, before the Reader, some persons may

be disposed to ask what is the need of adding another to the multitude of books already published on the subject of Prayer.

To such an inquiry the following answer may be given.

The popular views on the subject of Prayer can hardly be sound, when a very large proportion of our manuals of private devotion, are painful contrasts, both in tone and feeling, in manner and matter, to our Book of Common Prayer; and when the privilege of public Prayers in our Churches "*daily* throughout the year," is so little valued among us, that except in our Cathedrals, our Colleges, and in some Churches in our larger towns, the daily service has been wholly discontinued.

Sin, whether national or individual, is sure, even in this world, to prove its own punishment. Our forefathers in their zeal for reformation, made such havoc of the houses of God in the

land, that hundreds of them were reduced to "ruinous heaps."* But mark the effect of sacrilege ! We are now bewailing the utter insufficiency of our Churches for a population amid which "confusion, and every evil work" are rife ;—nay, we are trembling to think of the inevitable results—moral, social, and political, which must accrue from the undergrowth of heathenism which is springing up unchecked in the very midst of us.

So again, at the period alluded to, all our monasteries were destroyed, and their revenues for the most part wasted. What has been the consequence ? We sowed the wind, and we are reaping the whirlwind. Under the appalling conviction of the inadequate number of our pa-

* "On the whole, King Henry VIII. at different times, suppressed 645 Abbeys and Monasteries. Ninety Colleges were demolished in several counties. Two thousand three hundred and seventy-four Charities and Free Chapels ; and 110 Hospitals. The whole revenue of these establishments amounted to £161,100.—HUME, vol. iv. 182.

rochial clergy to the demands upon them, we have at length began to discover the evil of which our fathers were guilty, and to feel to what efficient purposes in stemming the tide of irreligion such collegiate bodies as those which were then subverted might be now applied, were a body of pious men, (not shackled by monastic vows, but resolving by God's grace to devote themselves to His service,) to unite together, under the direction of their ecclesiastical superiors, for the purpose of carrying the knowledge of Christ and his Church to those dark haunts of misery and guilt, the crowded courts and alleys of our manufacturing towns,—and indeed in one word,—to the entire mass of our teeming population.

And lastly, to give one more instance of the manner in which “the evil which hath been brought upon us” has been “the fruit of our own thoughts,” I would call

Jer. vi. 19.

the reader's attention to the fact, that as the *daily* service enjoined by the Church has been discontinued, men have grown indifferent to the blessings of *social* worship,—have thought more of themselves as individuals,—and less of the blessings and privileges of Church membership; the houses of God have been more and more neglected; constantly recurring opportunities of prayer and praise are not rarely spoken of as a burden and a bondage; and they are few in number who can really enter into the feelings of holy David as he exclaims, “O how amiable
are thy dwellings, Thou Lord of
Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 4. hosts! My soul hath a *desire* and
longing to enter into the courts of the Lord.
Blessed are they that dwell in Thine house!”

What can be done to meet the awful exigencies of our Church under all these melancholy and distressing circumstances, it is for her spiritual rulers to decide. Without episcopal

sanction, we can do nothing as it ought to be done—even in the pious work of restoration, and in reverting to usages which though enjoined by Church authority, have unhappily become obsolete : neither can we hope to secure God's blessing on our exertions however zealous—except in obedience to our chief Pastors. But under the guidance and direction of our Bishops, it is evident that our Church-system may, with God's blessing, be yet rendered equal to the emergencies of the times.

One great error of a former age was, that the neglect of ordinances was spoken of as though it were sin of the people *only* ; but surely we of the clergy ought not to have closed our Churches because there were no congregation.—“ If our people,” said Bishop Fell long ago, “ be negligent, *we* are the more obliged to industry ; if *they* are indevout, *we* ought to be more zealous ; if *they* are licentious, *we* ought

to be more exemplary, nor let any man say, the people will not be prevailed upon. How know we what will be hereafter? They who resisted one attempt, may yield unto another; or if they yield not to a single instance, they may to many, and more pressing."

Certainly all recent experience goes to prove that wherever *sound* Church-principles are set before the people, and opportunities are offered, they are not slow to avail themselves of them.

Now such sound principles with respect to Prayer, public and private,—are exhibited plainly, forcibly and convincingly, in Bishop Patrick's Treatise, and for this cause it is now reprinted.

May the Reader have grace given him to profit by it, and to feel that it is his bounden duty to inculcate the same principles in all who are within the sphere of his influence.



THE
I N T R O D U C T I O N .

The Design of this Book.

PRAYER is so considerable a part of a Godly life, and so great a means both to work, and to preserve, and increase all manner of godliness and virtue in us, that the ancient Christians doubted not to call “the very top of all good things, the foundation, and the root of a useful life; St. Chrysostom. the fountain and the parent of innumerable benefits.”

Whence it is, that they have left us so many treatises upon this subject; and that we find it

so oft repeated in their sermons; which they tell us they did on purpose, that the souls of their people might receive not merely a light tincture of this doctrine, but as St.

Chrysos. Hom.

Chrysostom's phrase is, be deeply dyed with it. Unto whose pious labours which good men have imitated in all succeeding ages, if mine be now added in a small book upon the same argument, I hope it will not be found altogether unprofitable, but contribute something to the growth of Christian piety; by stirring up this present generation to the serious practice of this part of it.

Which is commonly distinguished into *secret* Prayer, alone by ourselves; *private* with our families; and *public* with the whole congregation of Christian people, among whom we live. The last of which was first in my design, when I began to think of writing about this matter; because *Common Prayer*, which we make all

together in one body, unto God, is the most necessary, and the most prevalent, and yet, alas ! the most neglected of all other. But considering that men would be the better disposed to attend upon the public service, if they could be persuaded to accustom their minds, unto devout thoughts of God, and affections towards Him, alone by themselves ; I resolved to premise a short discourse, concerning Prayer in general ; with a special respect unto such secret intercourse with the Divine Majesty.

As for that which is called *private* Prayer in our several families, there needs no particular discourse about it ; but it may be sufficiently understood by what I have to say of the other two ; especially of *public* Prayer, whose place it is to supply, when we cannot have the benefit of it.

Now this duty of secret converse with God, by humble Prayer to Him, is evidently enjoined

ed in those words of our blessed Saviour, Matth. vi. 6. "But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet," &c. In which He doth not exclude *public* Prayer; but only forbids ostentation in it; and commands us out of love to God, not out of love to popular applause; that we may be truly good, and not merely thought so, to open our hearts to Him, when nobody sees us, but He alone.

That is the thing I intend to evince; that it is the duty of every Christian to retire himself from business and from company, that he may pray to God. In treating of which, I think it will be useful, if I distinctly shew, *first*, the nature of this duty; *secondly*, the necessity of it; *thirdly*, the great benefits we may derive from its serious performance.



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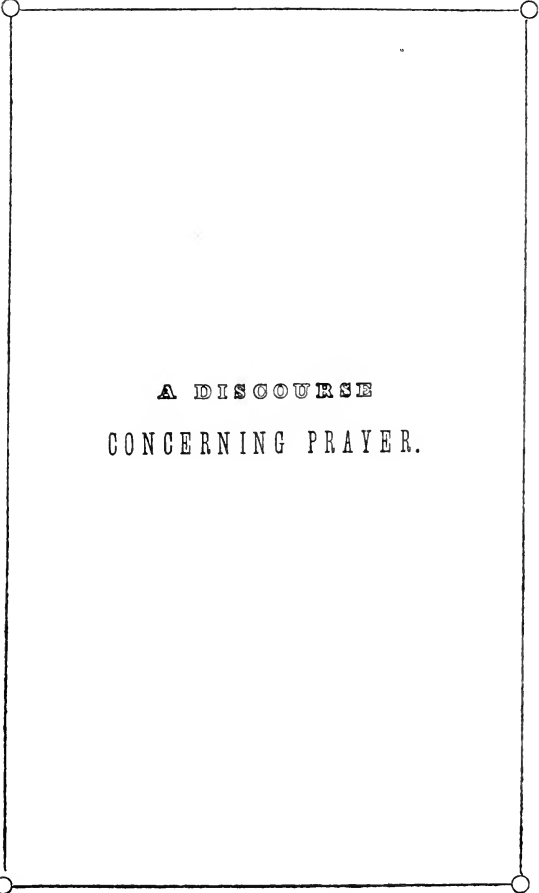
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A DISCOURSE
CONCERNING PRAYER.





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DISCOURSE CONCERNING PRAYER.

Part I.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE NATURE OF THIS DUTY.

PRAYER, in the strict use of the word, signifies the petitions we make to God, either for the bestowing on us good things, or the averting from us evil. And thus it is distinguished from praises of His divine perfections, from Whom those benefits we ask are derived; and from thanksgivings for them,

when they are conferred on us, according to our desires. Which, though they ought to accompany all our prayers, and it is impossible to pray aright, without such acknowledgments of God's incomparable perfections, and thankfulness to Him for His benefits ; yet they are not the things which are strictly and properly meant by Prayer. Which is taken sometimes in a stricter sense still ; merely for petitioning for good things : and so is distinguished by St. Paul, (1 Tim. ii. 1.) from Supplications ; which are petitions for the averting evil things from us.

In which restrained senses I do not intend to treat of it ; but by Prayer, understand an address of our soul to God, the Author and Fountain of all good, to request of Him those things, which we feel we want, and of which we are desirous.

1. It supposes, therefore, first, that we are in want : for if we were full, we should long for nothing. We want wisdom, and God's Holy Spirit, both the graces and comforts thereof ; together with His pardoning and sparing

mercy ; His gracious protection and safeguard ; provision for all the necessities of our outward man ; besides all the needs of others, especially of God's Church, and of that Church and kingdom in particular, whereof we are now immediate members. A supply of all which we would either receive, or have them preserved to us, if we already enjoy these blessings. That is, we either want the things themselves, or their continuance ; and therefore we ask them.

2. But further, it necessarily supposes also that we have a sense and feeling of our wants. For if a man be sick or empty, yet if he think himself well, or feel no hunger, he will neither call for his physician, nor for food. Though men be in the very jaws of hell ; though they lie under the power of the devil, and be led captive by him at his will ; though their lusts and passions tyrannize and insult over them ; though sin, as the Apostle speaks hath the dominion in their hearts, and they are so governed and ruled by vicious affections and desires, that they are no better than slaves to

them ; yet if they think this a state of liberty, and ease, and pleasure, if they have no apprehension of present or future danger, they will never be at the pains so much as to pray heartily for deliverance.

And therefore, if we will pray aright, we must be possessed with as great a sense of our spiritual wants, as we have of our bodily, when we are pinched and pressed with them. We must make our souls feel that there is a God, and that He is our chiefest good, and that in conjunction with Him consists our felicity, and that it cannot be any way attained but by conformity to Him, in obedience to His blessed will : and perceiving how short we are of this, nay, how far, perhaps, we are from God and goodness, how very negligent we have been in our duty to Him, it ought to humble and abase us, to bring us down upon our knees to sue for mercy ; and excite in us earnest desires after Him, and after righteousness and true holiness, as that alone which can bring us into His favour.

In short, our souls must acquaint us as tho-

roughly with their state and condition, as our bodies tell us when they are ill, or in pain; or hungry and thirsty; or labouring under any other burthen.

3. And then there is supposed a desire to have these wants supplied, as I have already said. Emptiness is troublesome to us, when we feel it; and it is impossible we should not long to be eased, by getting it filled. If we do but fancy we are in need, there is no rest till we find some satisfaction. We must be either satisfied that we do not need it, or we must have what we are satisfied is needful.

And in this consists internal Prayer; the desire or longing of the soul to be filled with all the fulness of God; to be satisfied with His likeness; to be reconciled to Him; and to be made daily more conformable to His will and pleasure in every thing.

4. Which desires we are strongly inclined, even by nature itself, to express in words, which are the interpreters of our minds, and declare what is in our hearts. For all sensible creatures we see make their moans by

audible cries, of several sorts, when their needs are great, and therefore man cannot be the only silent thing ; but is formed by God to implore His help, and beg his relief on all occasions, in such words as are apt significations of his inward desires. And that is the last thing observable.

5. Prayer is an expression of our inward desires unto God, the Author and Fountain of all good. For when we are desirous to receive an alms from any person, we always ask it of such as we believe are able, and we hope are willing to bestow it : but never make our applications to those who are as beggarly as ourselves. Now it is God only, who is able to supply all our needs, and hath revealed himself to be willing to bestow what we ask of Him ; nay, hath invited us to come to Him, and assured us he will grant our desires : and who alone knows our needs, and can hear the desires of all men ; and likewise is the only Judge, whether that be fit for us which we ask, or there be not something better than our own wishes.

Upon which account saints and angels are not to be invocated. For as we know not whether they hear us; nay, it seems impossible to us, that they should be able to hear such great numbers of supplicants, as, in several and very distant places, call upon the same saint or angel: so we know not what power they have to help us, nor what they can do for us, if they could hear us; but we know they cannot be in so many places at once, as they have suitors, to give them their succour and assistance. And besides they have made no promises to us, that they will so much as prefer our petitions to God, or do all they can for us; nor are they wise enough to judge what petitions are fit to be preferred, and what not; that is, what is most behoveful for us in all conditions and states of life, and in all the particular passages and circumstances thereof.

It might be added, that all these petitions must be put up in the name and through the mediation of our blessed Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, who is our only Advocate with the Father; but that belongs rather to the

manner of addressing our prayers unto God ; and therefore I here omit it. And shall only observe, for the further explication of it, that there are several parts of Prayer to God : as may be gathered even from that remark, at the conclusion of the seventy-second Psalm, “ The Prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended ;” where the foregoing Psalms are all called Prayers ; though some of them be doleful complaints of the sadness of his condition ; others of them confessions of sin which had brought him into that doleful estate ; others acknowledgments of his entire dependence on God ; others magnify His powerful and wise goodness, and render thanks for benefits received, and promise dutiful obedience, as well as petition for pardon and deliverance. By which we learn that Prayer unto God is made up of all these ; and that in a sense of His greatness and goodness, of our absolute dependence upon Him, and all the benefits we have received from Him, we ought to address ourselves to Him ; confessing how we have offended Him, bewailing the miserable estate

into which we have thereby brought ourselves, begging His pardon, imploring the grace of His Holy Spirit ; and in the sincerity and uprightness of our hearts resolving to be wholly His, and to serve Him in newness of life all our days.

And the truth is, every one of these is virtually a petition to Him. Whether we heartily acknowledge what He is, or adore Him, or praise Him, or give Him thanks, or confess our unworthiness, or profess our dependence on Him, or promise fidelity to Him, they all bespeak His grace and favour towards us, and move Him to bestow His mercy upon us.

This is a short explication of the nature of Prayer ; which will be something better understood, by what follows concerning the necessity of it ; though when I have said all that I can, I am sensible it will be defective. For Prayer is so sublime a thing, that the noblest wits have acknowledged, we stand in need “ of the Father to enlighten, of His first-begotten Word to teach, and of the Spirit to operate in

us" (as *Origen's* words are) "that we may be able to think and speak worthily in so great an argument."



CHAPTER II.

OF THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

WE shall be the more strongly moved to study this high and excellent duty, and to labour to perform it aright, when we are made sensible it is so indispensable a part of a godly life, that we cannot so much as pretend to the profession of Christianity, if we do not practice it. Of which there is this general demonstration, which cannot be gainsaid.

That which is founded in our nature, and to which we are bound by virtue of our being creatures; to that, every Christian is indispensably tied: it being the intention of the coming of our Lord Christ not to loosen those obligations we have upon us, as men; but to strengthen them, and bind them harder upon us; to heighten all natural duties, and to make us more deeply sensible of the laws that are written in our very being.

Now such a one is this of Prayer; which doth not stand upon a mere positive command, as Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper do. That is, it is not our duty merely, because our Lord by His authority hath made it so, but He hath made it so because we are made to it (as I may speak) and formed by God to acknowledge Him in this manner. For it is as natural a thing to pray, as it is to believe there is a God; and to be persuaded that we were made by Him, and not by ourselves.

Hence it is, that you shall not find in the whole law of Moses, any precept for prayer; of which, what reason can we give but this, that it was so sufficiently known to be a duty by the common light of nature, that there needed no instruction about it; nor can I observe hitherto any command in the gospel of Christ, barely for Prayer; but only for the manner of Prayer? As, in the place first mentioned, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father which is in secret:" and in other places, "Watch and

pray;—Pray continually;—Pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;—Pray in the Holy Ghost;—Pray always, and not faint;—Pray in the name of the Lord Jesus.” All which supposes the *duty* of Prayer; and only direct *how* it is to be performed.

For the further clearing of which general observation, let these following particulars be considered.

I. That it is natural to every living sensible creature, to look back to its beginning; and to own its dependence upon that, from whence it derives its being. Thus we see the young ones of all sorts of animals open their mouths, and wait, as it were, for provision from the old ones, while they remain weak and tender; running also to them for shelter and protection, while they are unable to defend themselves. Upon which score, Prayer is as necessary for us, and as natural to us, as it is natural to an infant to cry for its mother's breast, or something else equivalent thereunto, that may satisfy its craving desires. Because it is an acknowledgment and owning

of God; as the Original from whom we come, and as the Author of all good; in Whom we live, and move, and have our being; and a confession of our own weakness, and helpless condition, without His care of us.

The very heathens had this notion in them, that mankind being the offspring of God, brought forth by Him into the world, out of the womb of His Almighty goodness, they ought to resort unto Him; even as the chicken runs under the wing of the hen, by whom it was hatched; or the lamb runs to the teats of her that yeaned it. And this (say they) we do by Prayer; which is nothing else but the return of the soul back to God, from whence it sprung: our looking back to Him from whom we come; a reflection upon the foundation of our being, and of all good; our turning about to the cause of our being; a circling, as it were to that point from whence we took our beginning; that we may be fast knit and united unto God, and never be divided from Him.

Proclus 1 2. in
Timæum.

1. And therefore (to explain this more particularly) Prayer is, *first*, a high *Acknowledgment*, that God is the first cause of all things. We magnify Him hereby as the Root, the Spring, the Fountain of whatsoever we, or any other creatures are, or have. And without Prayer, we do as bad as say, we owe nothing to any higher Being than ourselves.

2. *Secondly*, we acknowledge also the *Sovereignty* which He therefore hath over us, and over all things: in that we ascribe unto Him a power to command them all, and to help, and relieve, and supply both us and them, according to our various necessities.

3. The *Independency* also of His Being is herein acknowledged; in that we ask of Him *alone*, as having full and absolute power within Himself of giving us help and comfort, without craving it of any else.

4. His *Liberty* and freedom also; in that it wholly resides, we confess, in His will and choice what we shall have, and how much, and when; all as He pleaseth.

5. His *All-sufficiency* likewise, to enrich us without impoverishing Himself.

6. Together with His infinite *Greatness* and immensity; which is present to all places, and ready to supply the needs of all supplicants.

7. And it is no less an acknowledgment of His *Omniscience*: which can not only give audience to all petitioners every where; but exactly know both their necessities, and their sense of them, and the sincerity of their desires; and also what is convenient for Him to bestow upon them, and will do them most good.

8. His inexhausted *Goodness* and bounty likewise; which is still ready and willing to pour out itself to us without any emptiness in the same blessings that He hath bestowed, for so many past ages. And—

Lastly, His *Eternity* and *Immutability*; in that after so many successions of men in the world, He is still the same unchangeable fullness; unto Whom we resort with the same confidence that good men have ever done.

In short, it arises out of a sense of all God's glorious attributes and perfections: which are

every one acknowledged in some part of Prayer or other; though we should not expressly name them. For in confession of sin we acknowledge His unspotted holiness, and that He is of "purer eyes than to behold," that is, approve, "iniquity." In deprecation of His anger, we confess His justice; in petitioning for pardon, we proclaim His clemency; in our request for grace and help, we give Him the glory of His power; and when we recount His gracious providences over us, we acknowledge His incomparable goodness and bounty. And therefore, unless we will disclaim God, and have nothing to do with Him, we must perform this duty of Prayer to Him. This is the first consideration.

II. To which add further, that it is natural for every thing that is in want to desire supply from him that hath ability to fill it. Now such is the state of every man in the world; we are at the best, weak and feeble, beggarly, and indigent beings, pressed with many and great necessities; which we have no power to make up, but only by going unto God.

Whatsoever is from the first Being, wants something that it hath. Every *creature* therefore is imperfect; and if any of them could be supposed to want nothing, yet it would necessarily want the continuance of its being, which it hath received from its Creator: and therefore it is a true observation of one of the ancient Theodorus apud Proclum. Ib. philosophers, that all beings pray, except only the first Being, which is God; Who hath none to pray unto, but hath all of Himself.

Prayer is a confession of the true state of our own souls and bodies, as well as of God's most excellent perfections. A declaration that we are poor and needy; that we are crazy and insufficient of ourselves; that we are dependent and holden up by another. So that we quite forget ourselves, if we do not pray to God: we renounce all care about our own greatest concernments, if we take no notice of Him, on whom our present and future welfare, both here and for ever entirely depends.

III. As it is natural unto every one in want to ask, so it is natural unto every one that asks,

to put himself into a fitting posture and disposition to receive: that he may appear unto him that gives to be a real object of his charity. Now this we do by Prayer; which is a natural expression both of our poverty and of our humility, (which very much move compassion) and of the sense we have that we are creatures who have nothing of ourselves which we can properly call our own: and therefore are naturally led hereby to think what submission and obedience we ought to pay unto Him, Whose is all that we are and have.

Upon this account, as much as any other, Prayer is necessary; that we may be put into a temper of love, and gratitude, and obedience unto Him who is the donor of all good things: and who expects that we should acknowledge the propriety He hath in all the gifts which His bounty bestows upon us. Which we do by Prayer: whereby we are constantly put in mind, in what tenure we hold all the blessings we receive from His hands; which we may not therefore use as we please, but as He allows and directs. And if we do at any time use

them otherwise, and thereby give just offence to God, their owner and ours, Prayer both naturally calls such offences to mind; and makes us more fearful hereafter to offend.

For no man comes to ask a benefit of another (as Mr. *Hooker*, if I forget not, very pertinently observes) but if he have given him any offence, he will then unavoidably remember it; and in the very first place cast himself down at his feet, and beg pardon, with a resolution not willingly to offend him again. Which resolution is maintained and supported by the very same thing which constrained us to make it; that is, the constant necessity we are in to ask for new benefits. For all men are naturally afraid to offend those, into whose presence they must frequently come to sue for favours. This keeps them in awe, and makes them careful how they behave themselves; that their suits may not be rejected.

We are not fit then to receive, or to enjoy any thing from God, without devout Prayer to Him. And therefore we ought constantly to perform this duty; because otherwise, we take

things by stealth, and lay hold on the blessings of heaven, without asking Him leave: and we ought to perform it seriously; because it will not otherwise have the fore-mentioned effect, of making us afraid to offend Him, without which our Prayers are nothing worth, and can obtain nothing from Him.

To end this, let us consider, that we do not pray, that we may alter the mind of God; who is always the same, unchangeable goodness, ready to give unto those who are qualified to receive his favours; but that we may alter and change our own mind for the better; and thereby become disposed for the good things of which we are desirous. And nothing alters us so much as serious Prayer; which puts a new mind into us; and for the present makes us quite another sort of creatures.

We are forgetful of God; lovers of ourselves; confident in our own strength; doters upon this present world; too much wedded to our own will and pleasure; complainers, murmurers, envious, wavering, and inconstant in our good purposes; unmindful of other men's

miseries ; revengeful and implacable, which are all bars to the obtaining of God's mercy. And therefore Prayer is absolutely necessary to remove them ; that is, to remember us of God ; to keep Him in remembrance, and to maintain an acquaintance with him ; to fill us with love to Him ; to humble and abase us in our own thoughts ; to draw our hearts off from this vain world, and to settle our trust in Him alone ; to fix our dependence on him ; and subdue our wills to His ; to give us a taste of spiritual pleasures ; to make us thankful, contented, and well satisfied ; to move our compassion towards others, who stand in need of our help, as we do of the help of God ; to incline us to be pitiful, and to do good, and forgive ; without which we confess, in our very Prayers, that we cannot expect forgiveness from God.

This consideration shews, that Prayer is so necessary, that there can be no goodness nor virtue in the world without it ; but mankind will grow strangers unto God, and He unto them ; which will bring all things to confusion.

CHAPTER III.

THE SENSE OF ALL MANKIND ABOUT THIS MATTER;
ESPECIALLY OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR.

IV. **I**T is truly therefore observed by *Origen* (in his Book of Prayer, newly come to light) that all people in the world pray, who own a Providence, and set a Governor over the universe: the contrary opinion, that there is no need of Prayer, being the doctrine of those only who are either altogether atheistical and deny the being of God; or of those who own a God in name, but take away His Providence. Which is manifest from hence, that all nations by a strange consent have ever thought it necessary to offer up some sacrifices: as an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God, and of the interest He hath in all that we enjoy; and as a humble supplication of His continued favour unto those who own Him to

be the Possessor of heaven and earth, by returning Him some part of those good things which He hath bountifully bestowed upon mankind. This was the nature and meaning of sacrifices from the beginning; which being all now abolished by the sacrifice of Christ, and yet it being natural to mankind, to offer something to God, it remains that we present Him continually with the sacrifice of Prayer, together with that of praise and thanksgiving, which are a part or concomitant of Prayer, as we learn from many places of Holy Scripture: where they are scarce distinguished, but used as words of the same signification. They are both joined together in the fiftieth Psalm, v. 14, 15. "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High." And, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." These Prayers and these thanksgivings, being presented by worthy persons, as *Justin Martyr* tells *Trypho* the Jew, are the only perfect, and well pleasing sacrifices unto God. To whom the sacrifice of beasts was never

Dialog. cum.
Tryph.

acceptable, no not when by Himself appointed; unless they were significations of pious and devout minds, begging pardon, imploring mercy, and rendering thanks for benefits received.

Alms indeed are also called a sacrifice: but they then only are truly so, when we give them as an acknowledgment of God's bounty unto us, with humble Prayer to Him that He would be pleased graciously to accept them. They are often therefore joined together; particularly in the story of *Cornelius*, to whom the angel said, "thy Prayers, and thy Alms are come up, for a memorial before God." First his *Prayers*, and then his *Alms*, which are an offering or sacrifice, when they attend upon Prayer and thanksgiving; whereby they are naturally put in mind of the poor and needy, and stirred up, even by the feeling we have of our own necessities, to relieve and succour them.

We pay no homage to God then, if we omit this duty; we live wholly without God in the world; and give no token, no signification,

that we own His being. We rank ourselves among Atheists, or Epicureans; who are men only in name, having lost the common sense of all mankind, which has ever led them to acknowledge God by solemn supplications and thanksgivings to Him.

V. Which is a duty so necessary, and so essentially flowing (if I may so speak) from human nature, that Christ our Lord, (it may be in the next place observed,) lived in the constant performance of it.

Christ, I say, “in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;” nay, who was “God blessed for ever;” who, in that respect needed nothing, and was able to effect all things; yet, as He was a man, prayed, and made supplication for those things, which as He was God, He already possessed, and could presently communicate to the human nature by His immediate conjunction and intimate union therewith. Notwithstanding this, He asked them of God, and beseeched Him to bestow them, because it was necessary and natural so to do, because it became a creature to own its

dependence on a higher cause, to give to the Creator the honour due unto his name, and to testify by this action, His submission and obedience, His humility and love, and that how highly soever advanced, (as the human nature of Christ was to the utmost degree of honour,) due acknowledgment ought to be made by it unto the Most High, who is the fountain of glory and honour.

And here I take it to be very remarkable, that there is no kind of Prayer whereof we have not an example in our Lord Christ. Of *secret* Prayer we read Luke v. 16, where it is said, "he withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed:" spent that retirement from company and other employments, in thoughts of God, and acknowledgments of the honour He had done Him, and in Prayer for His constant presence with Him. Of *private* Prayer with His disciples, that passage seems to be meant, Luke ix. 18. "And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him: and he asked them, saying, whom say the people that I am?" i. e. in His retirement

from the multitude, attended only by His disciples, He first prayed, and then began, by way of inquiry and asking questions, to instruct them in His religion. As for public Prayer, we read often of His going into the temple, the house of prayer at Jerusalem, and of His frequenting the synagogues, which were places for religious assemblies all over the country.

We read also how He prayed for others, as well as for Himself. For Peter, Luke xxii. 31. that "his faith might not fail:" for all His apostles, that His "joy might be fulfilled in them," and that God would "keep them from the evil of the world," and that "they might be sanctified through the truth." John xvii. 13, 15, 19. For His whole church, "that they may all be one, as He and the Father are one." ver. 21. And on the cross He prayed for His bitterest enemies, as before for His friends, Luke xxiii. 34. And after all we read, that it was His custom thus to pray to God, Luke xxii. 39. "And He came out, and went as He was wont, to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples also followed Him: and when He was at

the place, He said unto them, Pray, that ye enter not into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and He kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing," &c.

And as He prayed, so He gave thanks ; particularly at the raising of Lazarus out of his grave, John xi. 41. And He acknowledged and praised God, for revealing His will, not to the wise and prudent, but unto babes ; whom He employed to be the ministers of the gospel of His kingdom, Matt. xi. 25.

And as we have examples in Him of all sorts of Prayer, so it is further observable, that He has left us the like examples of the times and of the manner of Prayer.

For *times* of Prayer ; we read in Mark i. 35. of His *morning* Prayer. " And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and prayed." And in Mark vi. we read of His *evening* Prayer : for when the day was far spent, (ver. 35.) He fed a great multitude miraculously, and then constrained his disciples

to go into the ship, while He sent away the people ; which being done, “ He departed into a mountain to pray,” ver. 46, 47. He prayed also at *meals*, as we find ver. 41. of that chapter : when He had taken the loaves and fishes, “ He looked up to heaven, and blessed,” (or gave thanks,) John vi. 11. for those good things which the bounty of God bestows for the food of mankind. And lastly, we read of *extraordinary* Prayer, where a special occasion required it ; for just before He ordained His twelve apostles, “ He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” Luke vi. 12, 13.

As for the *manner*, we find He did it with all fervour, with strong cries, saith the apostle, (Heb. v. 7.) where he adds tears also, as an argument of His great piety. Secondly, with perfect *submission* ; as we find when He prayed for the removal of the bitter cup, which nature very much desired ; but He asks with this humble resignation of Himself to God, “ Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done ;” (Luke xxii. 42.) “ Not what I will, but what

Thou wilt ;” (Mark xiv. 38.) Thirdly, with all *due reverence and devotion* ; for we read there, that “ He kneeled down and prayed,” (Luke xxii. 41.) and “ being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly,” (ver. 44,) and with greater expressions of reverence, for “ He fell on His face,” as the manner was in great distresses, (Matt. xxvi. 39.) And lastly, with *frequent and repeated importunities* : for He prayed three times for the same thing, with the same submission, and in the very same words also. And more than all this, He prayed even for that, which He was sure God would bestow upon Him, because He having always possessed it as He was God, knew it was designed for Him, as He was man, in God’s eternal decree ; I mean, His glorious preferment into the heavens, to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. For which He “ lift up His eyes unto heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee :” John xvii. 1., and again, ver. 5,—“ And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me, with Thy own self ; with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”

Lay all these things together, and they will teach those that consider them, both the weightiness, and the great dignity, as well as the necessity of this duty. Unto which, who can choose but be awakened, when he sees the Son of God so industrious, so unwearied in it? For if Jesus prayed, as *Origen* argues, and prayed not in vain, but obtained what he asked, and without prayer could not, we may well think, obtain it, which of us can be so negligent as not to pray?

For to what end can we think was all this done by Him, but to shew us the obligations of human nature; and to make us sensible of our dependence on God; and that we can have nothing without His will, and that it is absolutely necessary our wills should be wholly regulated by His? He did not all this barely to give us an example; but to demonstrate and make us know, that no man, though never so perfect, can live to God, without praying to Him.



CHAPTER IV.

OTHER ARGUMENTS OF THE GREAT NECESSITY
OF PRAYER.

VI. **I**T may be useful to us, farther to consider that God hath appointed His Holy Spirit to us in this duty; which is a convincing demonstration of its great necessity; if we will judge of things, according to the account which God makes of them. Who, lest this duty should not be well done, lends us His power to perform it acceptably unto Him. And shall we suffer the Holy Spirit to wait upon us to no purpose? Nay, shall it follow us continually, and urge us to have recourse to God, inspiring us with good thoughts, and exciting pious desires, and we refuse to be led and conducted by its holy motions? This is as unnatural, as for a man to have a soul, and never think; to have a tongue, and never

speak; eyes, and a power to see, and never open them.

VII. It is as considerable also, that He hath appointed His Son to be our Mediator and Intercessor with Him in the heavens. Which supposes both that we will do this, and that it is most necessary to be done. For otherwise, we make void this new office of our blessed Saviour's, which God the Father, in His infinite wisdom, and tenderest compassion, hath erected. We make him an Advocate, without clients; an Intercessor, who hath nothing to do, but waits in vain for our petitions.

Good Lord! That men should be so ignorant, or presumptuous, as to account themselves Christians, and never, or seldom lift up their minds and hearts unto Him in the heavens; nor feel any need of His patronage; nor make use of His most powerful interest, for the obtaining any blessings for them; which they cannot have, unless they address themselves to God for them in His prevailing name, and His alone.

VIII. The necessity also of this may be

understood by the frequent injunctions we meet withal in Holy Scriptures, for "praying always, praying without ceasing, and with all Prayer and supplication, in the spirit;" as I have before noted. Which declare it to be a business of such importance, that we cannot subsist without it: but must use it as constantly as we do our meat and drink; or rather more constantly, it being of such great concernment that it is as necessary as our very breath.

The incense in the temple, as St. John teaches us, (Rev. viii. 3.) represented the prayers of the Saints. Now it may not be unworthy our observation to note, that whereas the shew-bread (whereby an acknowledgment was made, as some think, that they received all their food from God) was renewed and set upon the holy table in the sanctuary, but once every week; and the lamp in the temple (which signified perhaps the light of God's word) was dressed once every day: the incense (which certainly signified their prayers) was renewed, by God's order, twice every day, and offered upon the altar morning and even-

ing. Which may^a suggest unto us, that we ought to be more sensible of the need we have of the word of God and Prayer, than of the need of our daily food: but especially of Prayer. Though we *read often*, yet we stand in need to *pray oftener*.

IX. For it is our main security, our great safe-guard, our refuge and place of retreat, in all the dangers unto which we are exposed in this present world: and therefore it is not only mentioned by the apostle as a part of the Christian armour; but set also in the last place, as that which completes all the rest of the "whole armour of God," Ephes. vi. 18. "For," as St. *Chrysostom* often speaks, "Prayer is a mighty weapon, and powerful defence," without which, no man can be able to stand and maintain his ground against the assaults of temptations, nor overcome his spiritual enemies: but by which we lay hold upon the arm of the Almighty for our defence and succour, and engage the power of God to be with us, and assure ourselves, if we rightly manage it, of a certain victory.

Hom. xxx. in
Gen. chap. xi.

For herein we employ all the other parts of the “whole armour of God,” which the Apostle there requires us to take unto us, and to put on us. We use our knowledge of the Truth; and act our Faith, our Love, and our Hope; and have recourse to the Word of God, particularly to His precious promises; and declare our sincere affection to all righteousness, and our upright intentions to persist and continue therein by the help of God which we implore. So that it is the more necessary, because by Prayer all the graces of God’s Holy Spirit are continually exercised and kept in use; the whole armour of God is girt closer to us; and we are made more expedite and ready, on all occasions, to encounter with the enemies of our salvation.

X. Whence it was, you may observe in the last place, that holy men, who lived the life of God in this world, could never be persuaded to omit it. I will give but one instance of this, in the prophet *Daniel*: who, when he had received the command of a great king to forbear praying to his God, for the space of thirty

days, durst not consent to a compliance with his will and pleasure. And yet Daniel was a good subject, as well as a wise man ; who was very sensible what ready obedience ought to be paid to kings, and how necessary this obedience was ; where a contrary, antecedent necessity did not lie upon him, to obey God : especially when the thing was enjoined under the penalty of death, and when his sovereign did not require a total forbearance of this duty, but only for a limited time. And yet so it was, he chose rather to lose the favour of his prince, who had been very kind to him, nay to lose his life, as well as his honour ; and more than that, to be thrown into the den of lions, there to be torn in pieces and devoured by those ravenous beasts ; than to omit his constant devotion to the supreme Lord and Sovereign of heaven and earth. For, saith the history of his admirable piety, “ When Daniel knew that this decree was signed,” (mark that,) “ he went into his house, and his window being open toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed,

and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Dan. vi. 10.

Which shows that, in his opinion, it is more necessary to pray and give thanks to God, than it is to live: and that there is a necessity also of the frequent returns of this duty. For three times a day (as often as he did eat or drink) he continued, notwithstanding the great hazard he run therein, "to pray and give thanks before his God."



CHAPTER V.

SOME REFLECTIONS UPON THE FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS.

BEFORE I proceed to lay before you the great advantages we have, by the serious performance of this part of our Christian duty; it may be useful here to rest awhile, and only look back upon what hath been already discoursed. Which, if the reader will please to do with a composed mind and attentive thoughts, he may soon know what to think of his condition, if he never set himself to this holy employment, or rather heavenly privilege, of making devout addresses to God, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving for all the benefits of which we are desirous, or He hath already conferred on us.

Such men are without God in the world; estranged from the Father of their being, con-

tenners of His most excellent Majesty ; usurpers of His Sovereignty ; that set up for themselves, and live as if they were the Original of all things ; who stand in no need to be beholden to any one higher and greater than themselves. Guilty they are of the highest treason, because they refuse to pay the most natural and necessary acknowledgment unto the most High. They will not own Him as their Lord ; nor make any significations of their dependence on Him ; but use Him as if he were only a name ; to Whom we owe a slight respect, but no solemn, constant, reverence and service.

Lay this to heart, I beseech you, whosoever you be, that do not make it one of the most serious businesses of your life to pray unto God. Consider *what* you are ; in what relation you stand to Him ; and what a bold disowning of Him this is : that you may be humbled for it, and come and bow down yourselves, and kneel before the Lord your Maker ; to beg His pardon for this contempt, to beseech His grace, and assure Him hereafter of your faithful service.

2. And that you may do so, learn from the foregoing instructions, to pray to God; not merely because you think He *will* have this acknowledgment or else be very angry: but because He *ought* to have it, as we are His creatures; who cannot be happy without a due respect to the Father of our being, the Fountain of all bliss. If you think this duty might have been left undone, had not God exacted it by some positive law, it may make you less forwardly inclined unto it; nay apt, perhaps, to grumble sometime at the burthen (as you may be prone to account it) and too willing to find pretences, that may seem equitable and fit to be allowed for the omitting it. But if you look upon it as enacted in the very laws of our nature; as standing upon no weaker ground than our very beings; which we deriving from God, are bound thereby to acknowledge Him; you will not desire to be excused from it, nor be backward to it; but please yourselves, as well as Him, in this most delightful employment.

Remember, you ought to look up unto God

in prayer and praises, because it is a natural duty ; and that your nature strongly inclines you to it, because you are weak and in want ; and that you should make it your choice, because it is a most noble privilege to be admitted into God's presence ; and that you should choose to do it frequently, because you will be so much the more happy ; by having Him oft in your thoughts, and by being much in His blessed presence, Who is able to impart everlasting felicity to his devout and faithful worshippers.

3. Of which happiness let us not deprive ourselves, by forgetting God our Maker ; but be moved by the many arguments, whereby I have enforced it, to the solemn practice of this duty : unto which we are formed by nature, and mightily excited and assisted by grace.

Never rise out of your bed, but before you go about any thing else, make a tendry of your most hearty service unto God ; implore His blessing ; let Him know that you intend to be faithful to Him all that day ; that you remember your obligations to Him, and are resolved

to make good your promises : and so beseech Him to go along with you, and to “prevent you in all your doings with His most gracious favour, and further you with His continual help : and that in all your works, begun, continued, and ended in Him, you may glorify His holy name, and finally by His mercy obtain everlasting life.”

And do not offer to put a bit of bread into your mouths till you have acknowledged God who spreads your table for you, and beseeched Him to bless the gifts of His goodness to you, and to give you grace to use the strength you receive from them in His service.

In like manner, rise not from your meat without a renewal of your thankful acknowledgments for your refreshment : with such seriousness that it may be truly a *grace*, and not merely so called. That is, a hearty expression of your gratitude to Him ; and of your desires to have grace, to be as dutiful to Him, as He is bountiful to you, in these and all other benefits He constantly bestows upon you.

And never think of putting off your clothes to go to sleep, before you have commended yourselves, and all yours unto His merciful Protection; and reflected on His goodness, and thanked him for his mercies past; and expressed your humble confidence in Him, for the time to come; and beseeched Him to make you fit, and willing to die, and to be for ever with Him.

Business, I know, is the pretended impediment to all this. But is there any business of such moment, as that which we have with God? Or can any other business be likely to succeed without His blessing? Or have we the foolish confidence, to expect His blessing, and never ask it? Who is there that can say, his affairs in this world have suffered, by spending some time, in commending himself and them unto God? Nay, what business is there that doth not go on the more cheerfully and prosperously, when we have reason to think that God is with us. According to that wholesome saying, "Robbery never enriches; Alms never impoverish; and Prayer hinders no

work." Observe it; as no man hath the more in this world, for what he gets dishonestly, by theft or cheating; nor any man the less, for what he gives away, out of love to God and his poor brethren: so no man gains time for his business, by that which he robs God of, in not praying to Him; nor loses he any time by that which he spends with God in this holy duty.

Therefore let none of us, upon any account, neglect it: but think we do ourselves right, as well as God, by the serious and solemn performance of it. Our own wants, one would think, should stimulate us sufficiently unto it. Or, if we could be supposed to want nothing, yet, the sense we have that we hold all we call ours by the mere mercy of God, should powerfully move us to acknowledge Him, and to pay Him our homage of thanks and praise, and humble ourselves before His Majesty, as nothing without Him. Yea, it is an honour, and singular favour, we should think, to be admitted into His sacred presence: as I am sure, we should esteem it, did we enjoy the same privilege with earthly princes. Into whose

presence we should not think we could come too oft, if they would permit it: but we should be ambitious always to stand in their sight; and look upon ourselves as highly dignified, if they would be pleased to make us their familiars. Let us not then be so perverse, as to live, as if we thought the Lord of heaven and earth doth us an injury, or lays a heavy burthen on us when He requires us to attend Him: that is, when He bids us come to Him, and first ask, and then receive His blessing.

Look upon our blessed Saviour, and observe how constant and unwearied He was in this holy duty: how frequently He went alone by Himself, to give thanks to God, and to implore His continued presence with Him: how diligently He went to the temple when He was at Jerusalem; and to the synagogues, when He was in the country: how He acknowledged God in the most common benefits: how much time He spent publicly and privately in His company: with what strong cries He called upon Him in the days of His flesh: with what submission; with what reverence: with what

repeated importunities: and then think with yourselves; are *you* in less want of the help of God, than our blessed Saviour was? Can you live well enough without praying to Him, when His only begotten Son could not? Why do you not then go to Him, with fervent desires? why do you not imitate the Son of God in the frequency of your addresses?

To what purpose hath God given you His Holy Spirit, if you will not obey its motions? To what end is the Lord Jesus appointed to be your Intercessor; if you will send up no prayers, to be presented by Him in the court of heaven? Why doth He call upon you to "pray always," if you need not pray at all? Consider all these arguments over again; how naked you are without this Divine Armour to defend you; how all God's graces languish and die, if this do not continually maintain them; how good men have thought it better not to live, than not to pray and give thanks to the God of their life: and they will prevail with you not to be strangers unto this heavenly employment. An employment, wherein you will find much

comfort and no less success; if you do not negligently discharge it. For God hath a love to souls; and greatly desires their improvement. He would have them advance even unto His likeness; in righteousness, and goodness, and true holiness: else He would not so invite them and call upon them, as He doth, to fix their eyes upon Him; He would not have given them such help and assistance, and discovered such a wonderful love unto them, as He hath manifested in the Son of His love, Christ Jesus.

The heathen thought it sufficient to desire God to hear them; out of the love He bears to immortal spirits when they cry unto Him. So I find one praying, in an ancient Greek poet, whose words are these, "Hearken unto me, O Father, Thou great wonder of mankind: who takest a special care of an ever-living soul."

But we have a great deal more to build our hopes upon; and may say: "Hear us, O Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; who hast astonished us with the wonders of Thy love in

Him : hear us, out of the love Thou bearest unto the Son of Thy love : hear us, for His sake ; who laid down His life, to redeem our immortal souls ; who lives for ever to make intercession for us. Thou, who hast bestowed already so surprising a gift without our asking, hear us, and give us what we ask of Thee, when we ask it in His name, who gave Himself for us, and hath assured us, that with Him, Thou wilt give us all things.'''



CHAPTER VI.

THE HONOUR GOD DOTH US IN ADMITTING US
INTO HIS PRESENCE.

AMONG other false conceits which men have of this duty of Prayer to God, these two are very prejudicial to its performance.

First, they look upon it only as a duty laid upon them by God's mere will and pleasure : which might be spared, there being no real need of it, if it were not for this ; that God will have it, and hath ordained it.

Secondly, they imagine thereupon, that He is beholden to them for what they do ; and that they have performed such a great piece of service to Him, when they have prayed awhile, that they thereby obtain a dispensation to do their own will, when they have satisfied His.

To rectify the first of these mistakes, I have

shewn this to be a natural duty, and not merely bound upon us by a positive law: a duty supposed by our Lord and Saviour, rather than commanded: for it arises from our being God's creatures; who are therefore bound to acknowledge Him, and to wait upon Him continually for the supply of our necessities, from His bounty. And now I shall proceed to correct the second mistake; and thereby also farther confirm what I have said concerning the necessity of this duty: by shewing that this is so far from being a burthen laid upon us by His mere will and pleasure, or any such service whereby we oblige Him, or procure an indulgence, or connivance at what we do contrary to His will in other things; that in truth the service is done entirely to ourselves, whose righteousness cannot profit Him. Who intends hereby to make us really good, nay, excellent creatures; whose duty it is to look upon ourselves as infinitely beholden to Him, that He will suffer us to come into His presence, upon all occasions, and call Him "Our Father."

This I shall demonstrate, by representing first how honourable and excellent an employment this is: secondly, how comfortable and truly delightful, when performed as it ought: thirdly, how beneficial, both to make and preserve us, such as we ought to desire above all things to be.

Of the first of these I shall give a brief account in this chapter: wherein I shall endeavour to make the reader sensible, that this duty, which our own necessities call for and exact of us, is in itself a most noble and excellent employment. For it is the assent of our mind to God (as the ancient Christians describe it) a familiar converse, a holy discourse with the Lord of all: the withdrawing of our minds from this world, and all things in it; above which it raises our thoughts, and lifts them up unto the first and chiefest good: into Whose company it brings us, and sets us in His blessed presence; that He may lift up the light of His countenance upon us. For though it be the expression of our deepest humility; yet thereby we are lifted up above the highest top of

heaven, and passing by angels, present ourselves before the royal throne itself: as St. *Chrysostom's* words are upon this subject. From whence we may learn, by the way, that they little thought in those days of addressing themselves to any of the ministers of the heavenly court, though never so high; whom they passed by, and went directly to the Divine Majesty, as we may now, and ought to do.

This he represents in an excellent discourse of his upon another subject, as the highest dignity of Christians, of which the angels themselves are spectators, and very much admire *Περί Ὁμοσεως*, that the honour is done us. “For Tom. I. p. 372. as if in the presence of a great army, before the captains, and great officers, and consuls, an ordinary person be admitted to the speech of the king, it fixes all eyes upon him, and renders him the more illustrious and venerable: so it is with those that pray to God. For think with thyself, what a great thing it is, for thee who art but a man, in the presence of the angels, the arch-angels, the seraphim, the cherubim, and all the rest of the heavenly host

standing by, to be permitted to approach with much confidence, and to speak with the King of those powers. What honour is there that can equal this?"

Nor were the better sort of Pagans without this notion of Prayer; that it is our conductor unto God, brings us into His Divine light; sets us in His presence; draws Him to us by a divine persuasive rhetoric, and powerful sympathy with Him: nay, knits and unites us unto the first Being; and moves His bountiful goodness to communicate

Proclus in Plat.
Timæum. L. 2.

all good things to us: it being the opening of our souls to God, that He may fill us. To this effect *Proclus* discourses.

And is not this the most incomparable honour that can be done us, to be made thus familiar with God? The higher any persons are, the more we think ourselves ennobled, when we are admitted into their society; especially if we may at all times have recourse unto them, and be kindly received by them. By which we may judge what account to make of the honour to which we are preferred, by being

brought into the company of Him, Who is higher than the highest. With Whose most excellent nature to have true communion, is the greatest perfection whereof we are capable, either in this world or in the next.

And how is it possible to have serious thoughts of Him, and not in some measure be assimilated to Him, for while He is in our mind, we are, for the present, necessarily made such as He is; holy and pure, gracious, and merciful, tender, and kind, satisfied, and well-pleased in all things. That is, we cannot think of Him, without some transformation of our minds into His blessed likeness, while we do think of Him: of which more anon.

By which you may understand, that it not merely an external honour, which is hereby done us: but by devout Prayer we are naturally endued with true greatness, and nobleness of mind; raised above these little things here, (how great soever they seem in vulgar account) by having a sight and feeling of an infinite good. Unto which if it fasten us by faith and by love, we are made the friends of God: who

have no reason to envy the greatest persons in this world ; but rather to look down with pity upon them, if they be strangers unto God.

By conversing with whom, you may further consider, our minds are both refined and spiritualized, and also much widened and enlarged : which are two most excellent qualities, wherein devout Prayer improves us, by the constant exercise thereof.

1. Our souls indeed are spiritual things : but, being tied to these bodies, and thereby engaged in worldly affairs, and fleshly concerns, they grow earthly and sensual, dull, and heavy, if we take not care to keep up their familiarity, with their spiritual acquaintance and kindred in the other world. This we do by Prayer ; which is a continual exercise of our most spiritual powers ; a daily conversation with spiritual things, even with the Father of spirits Himself and His Divine perfections ; and with the state and condition of our own souls, both as they are now at present, whether they lie in sin and wickedness, or be endued with true holiness and goodness, and as they

will be in the other world, either in the blessedness of heaven, or in the torments of hell : and with our Lord and Saviour, the great Judge of all, who will sentence us either to the one, or the other ; when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and in the glory of all the holy angels : and with the Holy Spirit, the Inspirer of all good thoughts and fervour, in our desires ; Who together with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified.

All which things being perceived only by our minds, and by no other means, do very little affect the hearts of those, who never lift up their thoughts above this world, in Prayer to God ; but appear most real and weighty things to those that do. Particularly God's most glorious perfections, and the incomparable glory, wherein our blessed Saviour shines in the heavens at God's right hand, appear the most lovely, the most beautiful, and every way the most excellent objects, unto those that have their minds and hearts fixed on them : as we have, when withdrawing our thoughts from sensible enjoyments, we apply them wholly to

converse with God, in praises of Him, and thanksgivings to Him, and earnest desires after Him. By which also we are made to understand, of what consequence it is to our happiness to be acquainted with Him, and with our blessed Saviour, and with the Holy Ghost the Comforter; and we also daily improve that acquaintance, and are made more conformable to Him, as the only way to that happiness.

Which is excellently expressed by *Origen*, upon those words of the Psalmist, "Unto Thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul." "The fancy of all earthly things being discharged, and the eyes of the mind lifted up, to think of God alone, and to converse with Him, (who listens to us) in a solemn and becoming manner: how can they choose but be very much improved, 'beholding with open face the glory of the Lord, and being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.' For they partake at that time of a certain Divine sort of intellectual influence, derived to them from God: according to that, 'Lord, imprint the light of Thy countenance upon us.' Psalm iv. 6. The soul also

being lifted up aloft, both follows the spirit, and is also separated from the body : nay, it not only following the spirit, but being in it, why should we not say, that it is carried above itself, and ceasing to be a mere soul, becomes spiritual ?”

Of such things, men that never pray to God, or are seldom seriously conversant in this duty, have no apprehension at all : but are perfectly blind, and stupidly senseless of invisible and spiritual enjoyments. Whereby their minds are straightened and narrowed ; having no thoughts beyond their own poor selves, and that only in this present world : when they that set their minds to a holy converse with God in this spiritual duty, by this means, mightily widen and enlarge them (which is the other advantage I mentioned,) extending their desires and cares so far, as to make them solicitous for the welfare of the whole world, both now and for ever.

2. This is one of the greatest excellencies of Holy Prayer, that it enlarges our spirits so far, as to enable them to extend their charity

to all men : which it is not in our power by any other means to do. We approach unto infinity, and immensity, in our desires and wishes, and in our good will and readiness to benefit all the world. Every part of which, though never so far distant from us, we may help this way, and express our affection to it : though we are so contracted and limited in all other abilities but this, that we know not how to serve them in any thing else. Our Prayers alone can reach them ; and there is no country nor people out of their reach : but in these holy desires we may stretch forth our souls to the furthest parts of the earth, and looking up to heaven, draw down the blessing of God upon them.

By which we may learn the necessity, as well as the excellency of Prayer. Without which we grow strangers unto God and our heavenly country ; dull, earthy, poor-spirited and despicable things ; minding only ourselves, and looking no further than this present world ; and our particular concerns therein : but by the practice of which, we maintain our acquaintance with God, and with the spiritual

world ; nay, become friends of God, and grow great minded, heavenly, spiritual, able to look beyond our little selves, nay, beyond all things visible ; large, comprehensive, full of high thoughts, and lofty designs ; possessed with divine affections ; moved by truly noble ends, fraught with generous desires, and transcendent hopes ; which fill our hearts with proportionable comfort and satisfaction.

I conclude this with the words of St. *Chrysostom*, “ As the sun gives light to the body, so Prayer doth to the soul : and therefore if this be the great calamity of a blind man, that he sees not the sun ; what a loss it is to a Christian not to pray continually, and by that means bring the light of Christ into his soul ?”



CHAPTER VII.

THE PLEASURE WHICH SPRINGS FROM THE SERIOUS PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY.

THE great man just now named, would have us when we pray, to think ourselves, to be “in the midst of the holy angels; and that we are performing their service. For though we are far removed from them in other things, in their nature, diet, wisdom, and understanding, yet, ‘Prayer is the common employment and business of angels as well as men.’ By which we are segregated from beasts and knit to the angels, shall shortly be translated into their polity, their manner of life, honour, nobility, wisdom, and understanding, spending all our life in the service of God.” Which is a very pleasant contemplation, and a fit introduction to the second thing, I undertook to

demonstrate; how comfortable and truly delightful it is to approach unto God, in such holy thoughts of Him, and devout affections to Him, as we are supposed to have, when we make our Prayers, with praises and thanksgivings unto Him.

And here it may be sufficient to consider only these two things.

First, this must needs be a delightful employment, because therein we “draw nigh to God,” as I have already said; which is the description, the Holy Scriptures give us of it.

Secondly, in so doing, we commend ourselves and all our concerns, unto the care of infinite Wisdom, Power and Goodness: which is a great part of the business of Prayer to God.

1. The former of these may be easily understood, by considering, that “to draw nigh to God,” is to fix our minds on Him, and to lay open our souls before Him, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and everflowing pleasure.

That which produces pleasure in us, is the application of our faculties unto suitable objects, with suitable operations about them.

And the nobler the faculties are, and the higher the objects, the greater must the pleasure needs be, which arises from their conjunction. Now our minds and understandings are the highest powers which we have; and God is the highest object on which our minds can fix: and therefore the application of our souls to Him, by the thoughts and affections of our minds (which are their operations) cannot but produce the highest pleasure; as much above all bodily pleasure, as our souls are above our bodies, and God above all worldly things.

If we feel no such pleasure in our approaches to Him, it is because our thoughts of God, and our affections towards Him, are dull and lifeless. We do not stir up our souls to think seriously of Him, when we fall down to worship Him: but suffer our hearts to be far off from Him, when with our lips we draw nigh to Him. For were our minds possessed with settled thoughts of His Almighty Power, all-seeing Wisdom, boundless Goodness, tender Mercy, and careful Providence; encompassing us and all creatures, bestowing great benefits on us

now, and intending greater; they would unspeakably delight us. The smallest glance we have of any of these infinite perfections, (which we acknowledge in the beginning of all our public prayers) touches us, if we mind what we say, with a singular pleasure: though we cannot at that time, have more than a short thought of them. And therefore what joy may we not receive from hence, in our secret and retired devotions; when we may stay and look as long as we please upon any of those Divine attributes, which affect our hearts: delighting ourselves in the thoughts either of His Power, which nothing can control; or of His Knowledge, from which nothing can be hidden; or of His wonderful Love, which thinks nothing too great to give; or of His over-ruling Providence, which makes all things work together for good to those that love Him; or of His impartial Justice, which in due season, will not fail to render to all men, both good and bad, according to their doings.

And when these pious thoughts stir up in us the passions of love, and hope, and longings to

be more filled with such delightful thoughts of Him, and affections towards Him; the pleasure must needs be exceedingly increased: as every one may be convinced who are not so ill-natured, as to have nobody, that they love in this world. For they that have a faithful, especially if he be also a powerful friend, find nothing so sweet and delightful, as to love him sincerely, and to be sincerely beloved by him. And therefore to feel in our hearts an ardent love to God, which naturally makes us hope we are beloved by Him, cannot but give us a taste of the most excellent of all other pleasure. And proportionable to the degree unto which our love arises, will be the comfort and satisfaction that it yields.

Now, how can we choose but have this passion excited in us, and that to a high degree, when we set ourselves to pray to God, and to praise his Holy name? For it is some degree of love which is supposed to carry us to Him: and when we are come into His presence, and look upon Him, as Love itself, Who is good to all, and hath been extraordinary kind to

us ; we cannot fail (if we act in this, as we do in all other affairs) to feel a higher degree of it ; proportionable to the sense we have of His goodness unto us in particular, and of His universal goodness unto all creatures in general, according unto their several needs and capacities. Of which universal goodness we should

Dr. Bright's
Treatise of Prayer.

be more sensible (as an excellent person hath observed) if we did accustom ourselves to look upon His kindness unto us, but as one single instance and example of it ; and, by what He hath done for us, conceive what He doth, and hath done for all in their several kinds, which could not but raise up in our minds the highest admiration of Him, and such an ardent love to Him, as would make us rejoice in Him for the present, and repose an entire confidence in Him for the future.

2. And that is the second thing ; by commending ourselves to the love and care of God's Almighty Goodness (which is one great business of Prayer) we give our minds the sweetest and most solid satisfaction. For

having entrusted ourselves and all our concerns with Him, in an assured confidence of His fatherly kindness to us, and faithful care of us, we may comfortably look upon every thing that befalls us, as certainly intended for our good and happiness. And what a delightful thought is this, even in the midst of all the troubles of this life, if at any time they surround us? How pleasantly may we look upon all things, even those which look sourly upon us, and threaten mischief to us; when we can look upon them, as proceeding from the wise orders of Him, on Whom we have cast all our care, in a full belief that He careth for us?

And thus we may and ought to believe, because He hath told us as much. And, if He had not, we might have learnt it from ourselves: who are at ease, and trouble ourselves no farther, when we have commended ourselves unto a powerful friend, and left all our concerns in his hands; with an undoubted confidence in him, that he will do that which is best, as far as he knows and is able; that is, far better than we could any way do for our-

selves. Now we are absolutely sure that God knows and can do all things ; being no more liable to any mistake, than He is defective in His power, to do what He judges most conducing to our good ; which is more than can be said of the highest creature in this world, or in the other. And therefore, if we can make Him our friend, as we may by commending ourselves and all that we have unto Him, with a pious trust in His mercy, and entire devoting of ourselves to His service ; why should not our heart be more at ease, freer from all care and fear, and trouble, than we are when a powerful friend hath taken us into his protection ? In as much, as there is no friend like to God, who can give us such certain security as He doth, that all things shall go well with us.

Let us try, and not deny ourselves this high satisfaction ; by giving up ourselves to God, and putting all we have into His hands ; beseeching Him to dispose of every thing belonging to us, as He in His wise goodness sees most meet ; and to dispense Himself to us, ac-

ording to the most just rules and measures of His unerring Providence. For then whatsoever is cross to our natural desires, we may most cheerfully and comfortably receive, because it comes from Him: and whatsoever is agreeable to them, we may as certainly and comfortably expect, if it be wholesome for us. That is, we may be freed hereby from all grief and trouble, and from all cares and fears: and not only so, but be able to rejoice in the Lord always; as *St. Paul* exhorts with a repeated earnestness, Philipp. iv. 4. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice." And then adds the means thereof in the next verses but one; "Be careful for nothing: but in everything by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But the greatest comfort of all will be, when we quit these bodies, to think we shall lose nothing very considerable thereby; much less lose our souls: but having fast hold of God,

be only closer knit unto Him, in that love towards Him, and delight in His love towards us, which we have continually exercised in Prayer to Him. Which, as the better sort of Pagans could say, is a familiar conference with God, wherein we discourse with Him about our translation from hence and return unto Him. Concerning which if we never here confer with Him, we shall be miserably to seek in the other world; when we find that we have lost our acquaintance with Him, which we ought by continual Prayer to have kept up and maintained. And then our hearts would have been wonderfully full of satisfaction at our departure, to think that we were going only to be better acquainted with Him, and to perfect the friendship we had here begun, by nearer communion with Him in heaven.

This is the notion which *Porphyry* had of it; “we are here,” (saith he,) “inclosed in this body, as in a prison; like children, separated, and at a great distance from their parents; who ought to pray to the gods (as their language was) who are their true parents, about their

return to them. And whosoever they are, that do not thus pray to them, will find that they are no better than fatherless, and motherless children; who will have none to take care of them, and be kind to them, when they are loosened from these bodies to which they are now chained.

A lamentable condition this; whereby we may understand the comfort of going to God as an ancient acquaintance, when we go out of this body. How joyfully may we go to Him, with whom we have held a constant good correspondence; nay, maintained a sweet familiarity, by daily Prayer to Him? which will not let us doubt of a kind reception from Him, in whose company we have delighted much to be, while we were in this world; and have long desired to be nearer unto Him, and to be for ever with Him.

This is some of the pleasure of their life, who have a continual intercourse with heaven, in serious Prayer to God. Who communicates also, by His own immediate influences upon holy souls who look up unto Him, such hea-

Apud. Procl. in
Tim. L. 2.

venly joy in this duty, as I am not able to describe. For who can doubt, that He frequently illuminates their minds, and strengthens their thoughts, to understand and perceive His Divine perfections, more clearly and lively, than they could of themselves: and thereby raises up their love, and their hope, and their joy, to a greater height of satisfaction? Which He increases also by secret touches upon their hearts; exciting all these beyond the pitch to which our highest thoughts would advance them.

But omitting this, I shall conclude this head with the words of St. Chrysostom: which will serve also for an introduction to the next.

“Prayer is the employment of angels; and much exceeds even their dignity: as appears by this, that they approach with great reverence into the Divine presence; teaching us to address ourselves to God, with the like fear mixed with joy. With fear, lest we should prove unworthy of this favour; with joy, at the greatness of the honour that is done us mortals, in permitting us to converse continually with God. By

which we get out of this mortal and temporary state, and pass over to immortal life: for he that converses with God, must necessarily get the better of death and corruption. Just as those things that were always enlightened with the rays of the sun, cannot remain in darkness; so it is impossible that they who enjoy familiarity with God, should continue mortal. For if they who are taken into the society of a king, and advanced to honour by him, cannot be poor; how much more impossible is it that they who by Prayer have familiarity with God, should have mortal souls? Ungodliness and an irregular life is the death of the soul; therefore the worship of God, and a conversation suitable to it, is its life. Now Prayer leads us to a holy life, becoming the worship of God: nay, it marvellously stores our souls with the most precious treasures. Whether a man be a lover of virginity, or study purity in a married estate, whether he would suppress anger, or purge himself from envy, or do any other good thing; Prayer is his conductor, and smoothing the way for him, makes the course

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of virtue ready and easy. For it cannot be that they who ask of God Temperance, Righteousness, Meekness and Goodness, should not obtain their petition."



CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT BENEFITS WE RECEIVE BY SERIOUS
PRAYER TO GOD.

WHAT force there is in Prayer, both to make us and preserve us such as we ought to desire to be, may be understood in great part, by what hath been already discoursed on the two foregoing heads. Wherein I have represented, how it raises, spiritualizes, widens, and greatens our minds ; filling us with high thoughts ; possessing us with heavenly affections ; satisfying us in the love of God ; putting us into the Divine protection ; securing us against all events ; and drawing down upon us the Divine blessing. In short, it is a vast improvement of our minds, by lifting them up above themselves, as well as above this world : and that not only for the present, but tying us fast to God by a constant sense of Him, which

it is apt to leave upon our minds, it puts us into a pious temper, and constantly disposes us both to do aright, and to judge aright also.

For if we would know whether a thing be good for us to have, we need but consider whether we dare pray for it or no : and whether a thing be lawful to be done we understand, by considering whether we dare recommend it to the Divine blessing, and beg His presence and concurrence with us in it. This is commonly a good direction ; and will put a stop to us in all bad proceedings. Nay, so great a power there is in Prayer, that we perceive the good it doth us, even before we receive that which we come to ask. “ For no sooner doth a man lift up his hands to heaven,” as *St. Chrysostom's* words are, “ and call upon God, but he is snatched from this world, and translated into the other, if he pray with care and diligence ; so that if anger boil in him, it is presently quieted ; if lust burnt, it is quenched ; if envy gnawed, it is easily expelled. For as the Psalmist observes that when the sun arises, all the beasts of the forests lay them down

in their dens, who in the night had crept forth : so when Prayer goes forth out of our mouth, the mind is enlightened, as with a certain beam of light, and all unreasonable and brutish passions steal away, and dare not appear : Nay, if the devil himself was there, he is driven away ; if a demon, he departs : provided we pray with attentive and waking minds."

But I will sum up what I have to say on this argument, in this single consideration. If it be highly beneficial to be truly good, and god-like, we are highly beholden to devout Prayer ; which is a blessed instrument thereof. Now all mankind cannot but agree in this, that it is our highest perfection, and therefore nothing ought to be more desired by us, than to be made like to God in righteousness, goodness, and true holiness ; unto which it is easy to shew, we are formed by every part of Prayer. Whether we acknowledge the Divine perfections (which it is senseless to praise, and not to make our pattern) or confess our own guiltiness (which is a disowning and condemning all evil courses,) or make an oblation of ourselves to Him that

made us (whereby we deliver up our wills to His), or give Him thanks for His benefits, (whereby we confess the obligations we have to be wholly His), but especially when we petition Him for pardon (which supposes we resolve to be better), or for His Divine grace to assist us to perform our duty faithfully : of which if we have a serious desire, it will incline us and dispose us thereunto (for all creatures endeavour to accomplish their own desires), nay, it will powerfully move us to pursue what we would have, by such means as God, to whom we pray, directs us to use for the obtaining thereof.

Nay, the very thought we form in our mind, when we set ourselves to pray, that we are going to God, to place ourselves in His presence who sees all things, even the most hidden motions in the secret recesses of our soul ; which accordingly frames itself to please Him, as present to it, and inspecting it, and penetrating to the bottom of it ; searching the hearts and trying the reins ; this thought, I say, and the alteration it works in us, is of such great advantage to us, that if we should suppose

him who prays to God to be a gainer no other-ways, he ought (as *Origen* observes) to be thought to have received no common benefit, who thus reverently and piously disposes and frames his mind, at the very time of Prayer. By which how many sins are banished, and how many good deeds are produced, they can tell who apply themselves continually to pray unto God, with such serious thoughts of Him. For if the remembrance, and especially the presence of an excellent man, stirs us up to imitate him, and oft-times stops our inclinations to that which is bad ; how much more profitable will the remembrance of God the Father of all, with Prayer to Him, be to those who persuade themselves that they stand before Him, and speak to Him from whom nothing can be hidden ? This he confirms by many places of the Holy Scripture ; and concludes that if we got nothing else by Prayer, we should be sufficient gainers, by putting our minds into a posture to pray as we ought.

This may be farther demonstrated, by glancing briefly upon every part of the *Lord's*

Prayer : which no man can put up to God with understanding, with seriousness, and with fervent desires ; and not be thereby made better.

For how can we call God “ our Father,” and not reverence Him, and be filled both with a filial fear of Him, and with love to Him, together with hope and joy in Him ?

How is it possible to desire His “ Name may be hallowed” by all ; and we ourselves continue to dishonour it ?

We do not sure desire His “ kingdom” should “ come,” and exempt ourselves from His Government, and deny Him our obedience.

Nor pray that His “ Will may be done,” resolving to do as we will ourselves.

We cannot beg of God our “ daily bread,” and not rest contented therewith : much less be insensible of His bounty, if He give us more than daily bread, and bestow upon us, perhaps, great plenty and abundance.

When we pray Him to “ forgive us our trespasses,” we are at the same time taught to forgive others ; or to hope for no pardon our-

selves ; and this is one of the hardest, though a most reasonable and noble part of Christian virtue.

When we pray God “not to lead us into temptation ;” with what face can we think fit to run into it ?

And when we beseech Him to “deliver us from evil,” especially from “the evil one ;” we are strangely forgetful and careless, if we run into those sins, which throw us into the very mouth of that roaring lion ; who goes about seeking whom he may devour.

And, in the conclusion, who can acknowledge that His “is the kingdom ;” that is, He rules over all ; and yet not stand in awe of Him ; and honour Him more than any earthly majesty ? And that His “is the power ;” and not depend on Him and trust Him in well doing ; but expect that He will subvert us in evil courses ? And that His “is the glory,” and not give Him thanks for all His benefits, and use them to His honour and glory, and the doing Him service in the world ?

That is, who can think seriously of all His

incomparable perfections, which are expressed in those words, "Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory," and not have some suitable affections in his heart, disposing him to do that which is well pleasing in God's sight; who hath it in his power to make us either happy or miserable, for ever and ever ?

This is so plain a truth, that we cannot so much as say a short grace before and after meat, but it will dispose us, if we mind what we say, to the practice of such Christian virtues, as are proper at that season. We shall not, easily that is, drink too much, or play the glutton (as St. *Chrysostom* observes upon those words 1 Sam. i. 9, 10.)

Hom. 2. de
Anna, Tom. 2.

"but the remembrance that we must pray to God, when we have done eating and drinking, will be a restraint upon us, and make us use His good gifts in a convenient measure. For a table begun with Prayer, and ending in Prayer, cannot want any thing that is good : and therefore let us not neglect so great a gain. For is it not absurd, that when our servants, who wait upon us, bow and give thanks, if we

reach to them any portion of that which is set before us; we ourselves, who enjoy so many good things, should not pay this honour unto God; especially, since by that, we shall dispose ourselves for greater blessings? For where Prayer is and giving of thanks there is the grace of the Holy Spirit; and the demons and all the adverse powers fly away. He that is about to pray, dare not speak any absurd thing; no not in the midst of the meal: or if he do, he will presently repent of it, when he comes to speak to God. And therefore in the beginning, and in the conclusion of our meals we ought to give thanks to God; for this cause especially: that we shall not, (as was said before) easily fall into drunkenness, if we be settled in this pious custom. Which we ought not to omit, though we should chance to be overtaken, and to rise up from the table with our heads heavy, by too much eating and drinking; for though we offend now, we shall correct this shameful practice the next time."

Thus that excellent man presses Prayer and giving of thanks, upon such occasions; as a

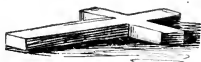
means to restrain us from those sins which are then too common, when a sense of God doth not govern our appetites, and preserve us in a holy fear of offending so great a benefactor, as He is continually to us. Whose grace the more earnestly we desire, the more certain we are to obtain it. For what can we suppose the good God to love more than a soul that hungers and thirsts after true righteousness; which it expresses by constant and hearty cries for it unto Him, who hath promised it shall be satisfied therewith? Neither religion, nor common reason will let us doubt, that He doth most willingly communicate Himself to such thirsty souls; and bestow this incomparable blessing upon every one that importunately seeks it at His hands. Let us but show Him, in our Prayers, that we are sincere lovers of Him, and of all goodness; that we unfeignedly long to be better ourselves, and to see all the world amended; that to be pure and undefiled, we desire more than any earthly pleasure; that we would have the "peace of God rule in our hearts; and all our things done with charity;" in short, that

we would “be filled with all the fulness of God;” but, as for all other things, we refer ourselves wholly to Him, and desire them only so far as they may conduce to our being, or our doing good: and we may assure ourselves of His gracious acceptance; there being nothing in heaven or earth more pleasing to God, than this holy temper of mind and spirit. Which therefore He will cherish, promote and increase, (if our desires and endeavours after it continue earnest and constant) till He hath brought it to perfection. For, as St. *Romanus* told his persecutors, “the sacrifice wherein God delights, is a soul that looks up unto Him; his only food, is the salvation of those that believe.”

St. Chrysost.

Hom. 48. Tom. 1.

delights, is a soul that looks up unto



CHAPTER IX.

THE THREE FOREGOING CHAPTERS IMPROVED.

BEFORE I proceed to that which I farther intend, it may be fit to consider these two things.

First, that we want no incitement or encouragement to the serious performance of this duty frequently.

Secondly, that we have a clear direction, in what hath been said, to make a right judgment of ourselves, whether we perform it as we ought or no.

1. As to the former, let us consider how we will answer it to God, if we be not mightily excited, by what I have represented, to be frequent and fervent in this holy duty; whereby we may receive such great benefits, such true comfort, and such high honour and preferment, as to be admitted into the Divine presence,

and to have society with the Almighty goodness, Who alone can fill our souls, and the thoughts of Whom do really fill them and give them satisfaction. Especially, when we have any reason to believe that He loves us; which we have just cause to conclude, when we feel that we heartily love Him: one proof of which is, our loving to be much with Him, and delighting in His company. From which we can never depart unsatisfied; but, carrying away a comfortable belief that He is with us, and will prosper and bless us, may pass our time delightfully here in this world, and cheerfully receive all events which at any time befall us, and rest perfectly contented in every issue of His wise and good Providence: unto which we have commended ourselves with a full trust and confidence, that it will dispose all things to our advantage.

This the very heathen saw in some measure, to be every man's interest as well as duty; In Timæo. which made *Plato* most judiciously resolve, that "all men, who have the least degree of wisdom and sobriety, call upon God

when they begin to move towards any undertaking, whether it be great, or whether it be small." And to the same purpose is *Porphyry* his observation long after; that "all wise men, in all nations, have been very diligent and frequent in Prayers, as a thing of mighty importance."

Proclus L. 2.
in Timeum.

Which we Christians better understand than they could do; and therefore should think it most advisable upon all occasions to apply ourselves to God, about every thing both small and great: because we believe Him to be the Governor and Disposer of all things; Who can make them instruments of our grief and sorrow, or of our joy and comfort, as He thinks good; and because (it appears from what hath been said on this subject) that so much of our life in this world is celestial and divine, as we spend in this exercise of Prayer to God.

Unto which therefore let both high and low, rich and poor betake themselves, as to the great instrument of their happiness here and eternally.

Let the poor pray that they may be con-

tented ; and the rich that they may be truly thankful.

Let the low and the mean pray, that their spirits may be raised and ennobled, enriched, and well satisfied ; and let the great and noble pray, that their minds may be humbled and abased ; their hearts emptied of self-confidence, pride, and contempt of others.

Let all pray that they may acknowledge God, and maintain a sense of Him in their minds, and give up themselves to His service, and beseech His grace and favour suitable to their conditions.

Let those who are still bad, pray to be made good ; and they that are good, to be made better. And if they really and heartily desire what they ask, they will be more and more successful in their desires. If they be not, they may conclude their hearts were not right with God : or they did not with becoming earnestness and fervency apply themselves unto Him (with a sense of their own great unworthiness) for His mercy and grace towards them.

2. For hereby, as I said, we may take a measure of ourselves, whether we perform this duty as we ought, or no. By which I have shewn we may reap the greatest spiritual benefits and comforts : and therefore, if we find that our minds are more composed and settled, if our hearts be more contented, if we be better satisfied in our condition, if we be more resolved in our duty, more steadfast in well-doing, more patient in suffering, if we can more cheerfully submit ourselves to God, after we have commended ourselves to Him, if we be more in love with all that is good, and more averse to every thing that is evil, it is a sign that we have prayed aright, because our prayers have done us good.

Let all that read this treatise, examine themselves upon this point. Are your minds made more spiritual by your Prayers to God, the Father of spirits ? Have you a greater sense of Him remaining in your minds, and a more lively sense of the other world and all the concerns thereof ? Are you raised above the petty concerns of this ? Do you feel your souls en-

larged in universal love and charity? Can you trust God more confidently? Are you less disturbed with fears and cares and such like passions? Do your prayers make you more just and merciful, more compassionate and charitable, more candid and favourable to others, more ready to do good, and to forgive, forward to contribute what you can to the comfort and happiness of every one?

Are your inordinate passions and appetites not only curbed and restrained thereby, but more subdued and mortified? Do your prayers give you a taste of such pleasure in God, and in holiness and goodness, as makes you desire to be better acquainted with them, and to prefer them above riches and honours, and all manner of sensual pleasure? Is pride, ambition, and vain glory, is malice, hatred and revenge, is anger and wrath, covetousness and care for the things of this world, daily suppressed and deadened?

In short, do we find that our thoughts are at rest in God and in His love? Are our hearts well pleased and satisfied in His favour

and grace towards us? Is this the highest boon we can beg of God, that we may be thoroughly and universally good? And when we find ourselves improving herein, and making any advancement towards that perfection to which we aspire, is it the greatest pleasure to us of all other? Are we abundantly satisfied in this thought, that by God's grace and goodness to us, every thing shall do us good? Are our hearts set upon rectifying all disorders in our souls, and provided we can but feel an amendment, are we quiet and in peace, and less concerned about external things, which we cannot rectify according to our desires? Then it is certain our prayers have been truly devout, and highly acceptable to God; as we may perceive by this blessed change in our hearts.

Which if we do not yet feel, let it not quite discourage us; but only quicken our spirits to more frequent and fervent Prayer: with greater intention of mind, and due consideration what it is we ought most to desire in our prayers to God. And if we do not content ourselves

barely with so many prayers; but long and labour till they have their effect, in such an alteration as I have mentioned, in our hearts: they will at last procure this blessing, if we be restless and earnest in our desires after it.

And therefore let us not slacken our endeavours herein; but setting our hearts upon those graces which we ask of Him, let us pray to him among other things, that He would enable us every day to pray better, and to more purpose; with stronger affections, and more eager desires: such as will work our hearts into a more exact conformity with Himself, and with our blessed Saviour; and both make us pure, and more in love with purity of mind and body; more heavenly-minded, and entirely satisfied in our heavenly acquaintance with Him and with our Lord, and in the hope we have at last to come unto Him, in that happy place where there will be nothing left for us to desire; but all our prayers be turned into praises of Him, and thanksgiving to Him, Who hath accomplished our wishes and fulfilled our petitions, by bringing us into His celestial

palace, and there providing mansions for us, wherein we shall attend upon Him for ever.

Thus I have given a brief account of the efficacy of Prayer to make us truly good.

Which is so evident a truth that *St. Chrysostom* confidently saith, "when I see a man neglect this duty of Prayer, or that he hath no love to it, no fervour in it, it is manifest to me that he is owner of nothing worthy or excellent: but when I behold a man unwearied in the service of God, and that doth not reckon constant attendance upon God in Prayer, among his greatest losses, I make account he is a steadfast practiser of all virtue, and the very temple of God. For it expels all vile and base thoughts out of the mind; it persuades us to reverence God, and the dignity to which He advanceth us; it teaches us to repel all the enchantments of the evil one; and raises our mind so high, that we look down with despise and scorn upon pleasure: for this is the only pride that becomes the worshippers of Christ, not to submit to the service of any filthiness; but to preserve the freedom and liberty of

their souls in a pure life. Which it is impossible to do without prayer : for who can exercise any virtue, that doth not come and fall down before Him frequently, who is the giver of it? Who can so much as desire to be sober or just, that doth not delight to converse with Him, who requires these, and far greater things from us ?





Part II.

OF PUBLIC PRAYER.

CHAPTER X.

PUBLIC PRAYER MOST NECESSARY OF ALL OTHER.

IT is confessed by all who have a sense of God the author of their being, that they were made to *glorify* Him. Which, in the Scripture language, is another word for God's worship and service; consisting in those *praises*, *thanksgivings*, and *petitions*, which make up the body of our prayers. By the *first* of which we acknowledge God to be what He is in Himself, every way most excellently perfect: by the *second*, we acknowledge the

benefits He hath done unto us: and by the *third*, we acknowledge our continual dependence upon Him; which by humble Prayer, we confess to be so entire, that we cannot subsist without Him. From which I have demonstrated, that thus to acknowledge God and our dependence on Him, is a natural duty; unto which we stand bound as we are men, and much more as we are Christians; who are made to know the great love of God in our blessed Saviour; by whom *St. Paul* desires, "glory may be given unto Him in the Church throughout all ages, world without end." Ephes. iii. ult.

I shall now proceed to show, that we ought not to content ourselves with the addresses we make unto God in secret, or at home, but look upon ourselves as bound to assemble and meet together for this end; that we may publicly acknowledge Him by our Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings. Which I take to be contained in those words of *St. Paul* now mentioned: wherein he expresses his desire that *glory* should be given to the Divine Majesty, in the

Church, that is, in the assemblies of Christian people (as I shall show hereafter) and that not only in his days, but in all succeeding times, as long as the sun and moon endure.

Unto this, we ought all to subscribe, and say, *Amen*, as the apostle there doth; and accordingly join together, with one consent, thus to glorify God in this age, as Christians have done in all the preceding: that we may transmit the same practice unto those who come after us in the future generation.

Which is a duty, I shall show as I pass along, much more necessary, and more highly acceptable unto God, than any private action of this kind, which we perform to His Divine Majesty. Unto whom we ought to resort in our most secret retirements, as our Saviour instructs us in those words, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet." But as this doth not exclude, I have already said, the public worship of God, so we ought not to think it is equal thereunto; but rather much inferior to that divine service, which we perform in our solemn assemblies.

I am sensible how cross this is to many men's conceits, and how much the contrary opinion hath prevailed, to the great detriment of religion: and therefore I shall take the more pains to make this good, that the public service of God, ought, *above all other*, to be carefully attended: or, that we ought not to satisfy ourselves with the addresses we make to God at home; but make a conscience also, and *chiefly*, to join in common Prayers and Supplications to His Majesty.

And if the advantages and comforts of Prayer be so great as I have represented, I doubt not to work in the considering reader, the greatest esteem of, and affection for, the public Prayers: whereby those advantages and comforts may be reaped far more plentifully, than by our private devotions alone. This I shall prove from three heads of arguments; under which I shall comprise all that need be said upon this subject.

First, I shall make it apparent, by considering the nature of *Prayer*.

Secondly, by considering the nature of *Man*;

Thirdly, the nature of a *Church*; in which Christian men are joined together, to have fellowship with God, and one with another.



CHAPTER XI.

GOD IS MOST HONOURED BY PUBLIC PRAYERS.

IN considering the first of these, viz., the nature of Prayer, we may either look upon it as an act whereby we honour God; or as an act whereby we seek our own good. And either way the public Prayers, which many offer to God with joint consent, will appear to have the pre-eminence above all other.

First, I say, if we have respect to God in what we perform in this holy duty, it is evident He is much more honoured by our public addresses to Him, than He can be by any thing we do in private; there indeed we may worship Him very acceptably, and find the blessed effects of it, in God's gracious communications of Himself unto us, suitable to our necessities, provided we do not neglect His public worship; which the private ought not to hinder but pro-

mote, because in truth it is defective without the public ; being only worship, but not honour, glory, or service.

We read of all these four frequently in the holy Scriptures, *worship, honour, glory, and service*. The first of which may be performed in the most secret place; but the other three have respect to what is done in public. In our mind, indeed, we honour God, wheresoever we worship Him, if we have a high esteem of His excellencies : but we do Him no honour, unless others see by outward signs and tokens the inward regard we have to Him; or we make the voice of His praise to be heard among men. Then we “give Him the honour due unto His name,” when others are witnesses of the esteem we have of His Divine perfections, by such actions as naturally declare it; viz., by our solemn reverend acknowledgment of Him, in His public worship. Upon which if we do not attend, men have reason to think we are void of all sense of Him, and have no respect to Him.

For the honour that is done to any one

among men, is always a public thing ; as those words of *Saul* to *Samuel* testify, " Honour me before the elders of my people, and before Israel." 1 Sam. xv. 30. Thus *Haman* understood the word " honour," when *Ahasuerus* said, " What shall be done unto the man, whom the king delighteth to honour ?" For thinking with himself, there was none in whom the king delighted so much as himself, he answered, " Let the royal apparel be brought forth, and the horse on which the king is wont to ride, and set the man thereon, and let it be proclaimed before him, thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour ;" Esth. vi. 6, 7. For he knew, that unless something was done in public, it would be no honour to him that received it. For who can tell what is in another's mind (in which honour lies) without such external signs as are real testimonies of his inward thoughts, opinion, esteem, and affection.

Thus the angel instructs *Tobias* and his son about the worship of God : " Bless God, praise Him, magnify Him, bless Him for the things

He hath done unto you, in the sight of all that live. It is good to praise God and exalt His name, and honourably," (or with honour as the words are in the Greek) "to show forth the works of God. Therefore be not slack to praise Him; it is good to keep close the secrets of a king; but it is honourable to reveal," (or to publish) "the works of God." Tob. xii. 6, 7. Which is the sense of the Psalmist; "One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy Majesty; and of Thy wondrous works." Psal. cxlv. 4, 5.

And what hath been said concerning honouring God, may in like manner be affirmed of giving Him glory; that it is done by public actions: it being nothing else but the publishing and spreading the fame of His Divine perfections, or of His wondrous works. This we learn, as from many passages in the Psalmist, so from our blessed Saviour Himself. Who a little before His departure from this world, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said,

“ Father, I have glorified Thee on earth :” John xvii. 4. that is, made Him known to be what He is, published His whole will and pleasure, and done whatsoever He commanded Him. And in like manner told His apostles, “ Herein is my Father glorified, if ye bear much fruit :” John xv. 8. in publishing, that is, His holy gospel, and bringing many to the belief of it. Which is sufficient to show, that if we do not honour God by what we do in private, much less do we *glorify* Him, which wholly refers to proclaiming His name, and setting forth His praise.

And from all this it follows that we cannot be said to do Him any service, by our private addresses to Him : whereby we only serve ourselves. For then we serve Him by our worship, when we openly acknowlege Him, and own Him to be what indeed He is, the the great Creator and most wise Governor of the world : who therefore (we hereby testify and declare) ought in our opinion, to be worshipped by all men, with the same reverent regard which we pay unto Him.

In brief, we do Him honour, when we openly declare with what blessed company we read of in the Revelation iv. 11. that He is “worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power: for Thou, O Lord,” (say they) “hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Then we also glorify Him, when we declare His “greatness, and goodness, and speak of the glory of His kingdom, and talk of His power. Worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness,” or in his glorious sanctuary; as the Psalmist speaks Psal. xxix. 2. cxlv. 6, 11.

And hereby we serve Him very much, and do something, which promotes His interest in the world; whereas all that we do in private only promotes our own.

This I shall explain in three particulars.

1. The public worship of God doth Him great service, by maintaining a sense of God in the world, and preserving the notion of Him; which would be in danger to be lost, if His worship were only in secret, or among a few persons privately, where nobody knew

what they did, but they themselves. Such close and retired devotion would have no power to uphold and keep up a religious regard to the Almighty Creator of all things among His creatures. All that it could do, must be upon those particular men themselves who secretly worshipped Him ; but upon others it could do nothing at all : for how could that preserve the knowledge of God, which was not itself known ? And how prone would men be to conclude, that the being of God was only a dark fancy in some men's minds ; whose single opinion could have no authority at all, but rather be despised, as being ashamed to own itself, or having no public approbation ? Which the public worship of God gives it ; and not only supports the belief of God's Being, in men's minds, as the common sense of mankind, but is apt to strike men with some awe of Him, when they see a great many, with humble devotion and reverence, with bended knees, and eyes lifted up to heaven, paying their solemn acknowledgments to His Majesty. Especially when they see

Him thus adored by men of the greatest place, and in the highest reputation for wisdom and knowledge: who will have a heavy account to give unto the supreme Lord and Judge of all, if they do not contribute to the upholding His authority among men, by frequenting the public assemblies, and by their reverend deportment there.

II. Whereby not only a sense of Him in general is preserved; but a sense also of His greatness and magnificence (as I may call it) is bred and nourished in men's minds. Who joining as one man in the same service, are taught not only that God is, but what He is, infinite in all perfections. For when a multitude of people meet together, even as many as a spacious place can contain, to worship the same Being; it doth most naturally signify and declare, that He is exceeding great and glorious, Whom so many own for their Lord; upon Whom they depend for all they have or can have; which is not signified or represented, when only one, or two, or a few, pray to Him.

Therefore this is a reason, both that we

should hold public assemblies, and that they should be as full as is possible, and all who belong to them should crowd unto them, to testify that they look upon Him who is there worshipped to be the "great King over all the earth," as the Psalmist speaks, *xlvi. 2*. For great numbers meeting together to do their homage to Him, it is the most natural sign that can be contrived (which private worship is not) that we take Him to be the Sovereign of the world, the Lord of all, above all, good unto all, in one word, the common Parent of us all, to Whom we resort for His blessing.

This is a demonstration that *Public* worship is to be preferred before all other, because most suitable to His most excellent Majesty; the best token of the high thoughts we have of Him; the utmost we are able to do, to testify how great and how good we believe Him to be, how able and willing to help us all, as being equally related unto all.

And the more meet together for this end, the better this is declared, that He cannot be honoured and glorified enough; but we stand

in need of the united thoughts and affections of all mankind, could they be assembled at once, to magnify His incomparable perfections.

Nay, if all the creatures in heaven and in earth (as a very worthy person observes) could meet together in one body, to worship Him, at the same time and in the same place, it would still be much better, because more suitable to His most excellent Majesty ; being still a better signification of His infinite perfections, and of His vast dominions, which He governs with inconceivable wisdom, and takes care of with a most provident goodness.

And though no one place here on earth, is big enough to contain so much as one nation, or country, or great city ; yet we meeting in several places of the same kind, and set apart for the same purpose, to worship God, at one and the same time, it approaches something near unto this ; all the people that are under one and the same government, hereby setting forth God's praise together, at the very same moment, and in the like, though not the very

same individual place ; where they uniformly acknowledge Him with joint consent to be their common preserver and benefactor. Which is far more agreeable to the perfection of His most excellent nature, than the single or private applications that are made to Him : in which there is no sensible declaration made what He is able to do for all ; but only what He is able to do for one, or for a few.

For which reason the universal Church anciently observed certain set hours of Prayers ; that all Christians throughout the world might at the same time join together to glorify God ; and some of them were of opinion, that the angelical host, being acquainted with those hours, took that time to join their prayers and praises with those of the Church. For common reason led them to this thought, that those noble creatures are highly concerned to set forth, to the utmost of their power, the glorious honour of God's Majesty ; Who, as He is exalted above all blessing and praise, so hath the utmost pitch of praise, to which creatures can reach, given unto Him,

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when the whole family of heaven and earth combine together at once to worship Him.

Thence it was that the Psalms of *David*, though many of them particularly concerned himself, were directed to the chief Musician, for the public service; as the way "to make His praise glorious." So the Psalmist speaks in Psalm lxvi.; which begins with a desire that "all lands would make a joyful noise unto God, and sing forth the honour of His name, and make His praise glorious." That is, this was the way to do something suitable to the surpassing glory of His Majesty. For "great" (saith he elsewhere) "is the Lord, and" therefore "greatly to be praised in the city of our God." Psal. xlviii. 1. He was not "greatly praised," suitably to His greatness, unless it were in that place where they all met together to praise Him. No, the very private blessings bestowed on David, he would have publicly celebrated by all the people. And therefore doth not only say, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be continually in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast of the

Lord," but adds, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Psal. xxxiv. 1, 2, 3. And therefore much more were the common blessings poured on them all, to be thus acknowledged, and His "praise sung in the congregation of saints," as the words are, Psal. cxlix. 1., that is, by all the people of the Jews. Nay, by all the people on the face of the earth, as he speaks, "O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him all ye people." Psal. cxvii. Which St. *Paul* shews in Romans xv. 11., was accomplished; when the Gentiles submitted themselves to Christ, and became members of his Church, therein to praise Him continually in their public assemblies.

III. In which the sense of God will not only be preserved, suitable to His most excellent greatness and goodness; but preserved pure and sincere; free from those dangerous mixtures which may sooner creep into it, to corrupt and embase it, if He should be worshipped only in private. Where every man may frame conceits of the divine Majesty,

agreeable to his own inclinations, and there is no such way to prevent or correct them, as by attending upon the public offices of religion. Into which, errors are not so easily admitted, because men are naturally careful about that which they expose to the public view; not being willing themselves to appear before others with such neglect, as they are sometimes found in when they are alone. Or, if there be any thing dangerous admitted there, it will soon be discovered, and if not redressed, yet opposed by good men; as all corruptions have been at their first appearance, though in process of time they have prevailed.

They began in private; and from thence, by degrees adventured to appear in public: where they would have appeared sooner, if the common sense of mankind, or of Christian people had not been against them.

There is nothing so sound, but in time it may be tainted; yet it is likely the longer to remain sound, when there is a public care about it. And, besides, when it is corrupted, it is not in so many things, as it would have

been, had the service of God been left only to every man's private management; for then there may be as many false imaginations as there are men, and the whole body of religion entirely depraved.

As it is an act therefore, whereby we do honour unto God, Prayer ought to be public; that it may be seen we own Him, and honour Him; and that He may be honoured suitably to His transcendent greatness, and His universal goodness. Which require that He be universally acknowledged, as not merely a *particular* Benefactor, but as the *common* Father of us all; Whose munificence is declared to be the greater, when He hath a number of clients, and as many thankful servants; who come together upon the same business to proclaim His praise, and shew forth the wonderful works He hath done for them.

In sum, as a great multitude of poor people constantly waiting at the gates of a house, speak him that dwells in it, to be far more liberal and bountiful, than he would be believed, if few or none were seen expecting

there ; even so do the assemblies of pious supplicants and devout worshippers spread the fame of God's inexhausted goodness far and near ; of which there is no notice at all when few or none tread in the courts of His house, but content themselves with a private attendance on Him. This very much damps the sense of God ; at least of His infinite greatness and goodness ; and as it represents Him after a poor and mean fashion ; so endangers the propagation of such notions of Him, as will disparage and dishonour Him.

For which reason there is no serious Christian, who lays things to heart, but must needs be grieved and sigh, to see such stately structures, as our cathedral churches (which are built to contain a multitude of worshippers, and to represent the inconceivable greatness of Him who is there worshipped) so very empty and void of people, in our *daily* assemblies ; as if we had forsaken God, or had lost all sense of the honour that is due unto Him. This is a thing very much to be lamented, and speedily amended, lest God forsake us, and make us a

reproach, saying, as the Prophet speaks, that He hath no delight in us ; because we have dishonoured His holy name, and take no delight in His divine service.



CHAPTER XII.

PUBLIC PRAYERS MOST ADVANTAGEOUS UNTO US.

LET us now proceed to consider the second part of this argument; which hath respect unto Prayer as an act whereby we seek our own good; and it will appear as plainly, that the *public* Prayers contribute most unto it. If we had no other reason to assert this, but that now named, it were sufficient, that God is hereby most honoured. For whatsoever doth Him most honour, will certainly do us most good, according to His own maxim; "him that honoureth Me, I will honour: but he that despiseth Me, shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. But we have other reasons also, to demonstrate that if we have respect to ourselves in our Prayers, and the good we derive thereby upon our souls and bodies, and all our concerns, it leads us to the public Prayers, as likely to be most prevalent.

I. For first, we may pray there with much more confidence, than we can in those private petitions we put up to God ; both because the things we ask publicly are approved as needful and good in the judgment of all ; and are also sought for and desired by a common consent. And therefore we may be the more assured, they are good for us, and being so, shall be bestowed upon us.

This is a thing of very great moment in Prayer, to have a confidence of being heard, which we cannot have, as *St. John* teaches us, unless we not only “keep God’s commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight,” 1 John, iii. 22. but also “ask according to His will,” ver. 14. Now the matter of our Prayers cannot be so well warranted to be “according to God’s will,” when they are only of private conception, as it is when they have the stamp of public authority : and therefore in our single devotions, we must needs fall short of that degree of confidence, which we may have when we join in Prayer with all our Christian brethren ; who agree to

ask the same thing, with a settled belief that it is agreeable to His will.

Common reason, and much more Christian humility, teaches us to suspect our own private understanding: which cannot give us such assurance that a thing is good, and wholesome, and necessary for us, as the universal opinion of all our brethren about it, doth work in us. Which is one advantage of joining in public Prayers, wherein all agree, as being formed by the public judgment of the governors of the Church, and accepted by the generality of God's people, and found, by long observation, to contain nothing but what is fit to be asked of the Almighty goodness.

II. There are some things indeed, which every one may be assured, are undoubtedly according to God's will; and there are those who fancy that authorized Prayers may as well be put up to God at home, as in the church. But it is farther to be considered, that the united force of a great many persons who join in a petition, is far stronger and more prevalent, than the address of a single supplicant. All

mankind are of this opinion, in the addresses they make to earthly princes; from whom they hope more easily to obtain their suit, when they come in a body, and present the petition of a multitude, than when one or two make the same request unto them. An example of which, I remember St. *Chrysostom* presses his people withal, while it was fresh in their memories, to make them understand the mighty power of that Prayer which is made, with the common consent of all. "About ten years ago, (saith he,) you know their were several persons apprehended, who affected empire, and conspired to subvert the present government. One of whom, who was of great eminence, being led forth to execution, with a rope in his mouth, the whole city ran into the circus where the Emperor then was, and by their common cries pacified his anger, and obtained a pardon for him, who deserved none. And if to appease the wrath of an earthly prince, you all run forth with wives and children to deprecate his displeasure; why do you not all concur to obtain mercy of the King of heaven, not for

one, (as in the case now named) or two, or three, or a hundred, but for a world of sinners? That God having a respect to your common Prayers offered with joint consent, may release to them their punishment, and absolve you from your sins?

Such petitions the ancient Christians thought so powerful, that they supposed they could obtain anything of God; by combining, as it were, together to seek His favour in the common Prayers of the whole assembly. “We come,” saith *Tertullian*, “by troops to make our Prayers to God; that being banded, as it were, together we may with a strong hand sue to Him for His favour. This violence is grateful unto God.” It is a force which he loves, and such pressing supplicants are welcome to His Majesty.

To the same purpose St. *Ambrose* speaks in his book of repentance, as Mr. *Hooker* hath observed: “many of the meanest being gathered together unanimously, become great. And it is impossible the Prayers of many should be contemned.” Which was a notion

so much rooted in the Jewish nation, that they have an opinion “the Prayers of the congregation were always heard; but not so the Prayers of particular persons in private;” as Mr. *Thorndike* observes out of *Maimonides*.

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P. 173.

But we have no need of their opinion, or any one's else to justify this, that there is the greatest force in the public Prayers, of many joining their desire in the same petitions. For St. *Paul*, (who might presume to have as much power with God, upon his own single interest in Him, as any man whatsoever;) yet thought the Prayers of a great number of Christians, would do Him more service. And therefore frequently begs of the Churches, that they would assist him with the earnest Prayers to God for him. Thus he writes to the Romans, “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit” (observe how passionately he desires this) “that ye strive together with me” (it is such a kind of phrase, as that I mentioned of *Tertullian's*) “in your Prayers to God for

me ; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea ; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints." Rom. xv. 30, 31. And to the Corinthians, " You also helping together by Prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us, by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." 2 Cor. i. 11. Where he plainly acknowledges, it would be much to his advantage, if many did contribute their help, both in Prayers, and in Thanksgivings on his behalf. Nay, he should be able, he thought, to preach the gospel better, and with more authority as well as freedom, if the common Prayers of Christian people were not wanting on his behalf. " Continue in Prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving ; withal, praying also for us, that God would open us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in bonds : that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.' Coloss. iv. 2, 3, 4. Behold how solicitous St. Paul was to have the benefit of the Church's common

Prayer. And how great a man was he? Inferior to none, but rather as St.

Chrysostom describes him, “ the very best of men ; the teacher of the world ; who speedily passed, as if he had wings, over sea and land ; that chosen vessel ; the spokes-man of Christ, to espouse souls to Him ; the planter of Churches ; the wise master-builder ; the preacher, racer, &c. ; who left monuments of his virtue all the world over ; who was snatched into the third heaven, before the resurrection ; who was taken up into paradise ; whom God made partaker of ineffable mysteries ; who received a more abundant grace ; and laboured more abundantly than they all :” this man begs for the public Prayers, and could not be satisfied, unless he was commended by them to the grace of God. A sign that he looked upon them as most efficacious ; for “ though God” (as *Grotius* excellently observes, upon Matth. xviii. 19.) “ oft-times grants to one man’s Prayers, that which he asks, yet to many who unanimously join in the same petitions, He gives, both more wil-

Hom. xxxiii.
Tom. 1. de pe-
titione filiorum
Zebed.

lingly, and more largely, and more speedily." Which, by the way, is an unanswerable reason, why the public Prayers ought to be in a known tongue, that all may join in desiring the same thing : and by their united desires prevail for the greater blessing. Hear St. *Chrysostom* ; whose words upon the 2 Cor. Hom. xviii. in
2 Cor viii. 24. marvellously illustrate this and all that I have said. Where the apostle exhorting them to shew to those, whom he had sent, a proof of their love before the Churches, he interprets it, "in the public assemblies." And then adds ; "and this is no small matter ; for great is the power of an assembly, or of the Churches. Behold what their Prayer can do ; it loosed the bonds of Peter ; and it opened the mouth of Paul. They that are about to be ordained therefore beg the Prayers of the congregation ; in like manner for those who are possessed, and for those that are in penance, Prayers are made by the whole Church ; and not by the priest only. They all say one and the same Prayer, a Prayer full of compassion. For in this the people are concerned as well as

the priest, they praying for him, as he for them. He saith, 'The Lord be with you;' and they answer, 'and with thy spirit.' And what wonder is it, if they pray with the priest, when they send up the holy hymns of the Church, in common with the cherubims, and the powers above?"

This that good Father repeats very often, and I wish it were imprinted in all our minds, and did sink down into all our hearts. "The

Common Prayer of the Church can do much; when we offer up those

Hom. iii. ad
pop. Antioch.

Prayers with an afflicted soul, and with a broken and contrite heart." The same,

L. viii. p. 424.
Edit. Cant.

Origen tells *Celsus*, in words worthy to be remembered. "If when two of us on earth agree together to ask anything, it is granted by the Father of the just, who is in Heaven, (Matth. xviii. 19.) for God delights in the symphony and agreement of rational creatures, and is displeased with their discord and disagreement, what might we not expect, if not only, as now, a very few, but the whole Roman empire agreed together to sue for the Divine

favour? They might pray to Him that said heretofore to the Hebrews, when the Egyptians pursued them, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace," Exod. xiv. 14. And praying most unanimously, obtain greater victories than Moses then did by his Prayer to God for help."

III. But farther we are to consider, how much our zeal and devotion is naturally inflamed by public assemblies: which is a thing of great power in Prayer. For it is that which the apostle calls praying in the spirit, and praying in the Holy Ghost: with fervent, that is, and inflamed desires, such as the Holy Ghost excites, when it is pleased to breathe upon our souls.

Now this, as I said, is even naturally stirred up, by the fervour of those devout worshippers, with whom we join our petitions. For who can see a great many good people fall down together, and kneel before the Lord their maker, with hands and eyes lifted up to Heaven, imploring His grace and mercy (which are things supposed in Christian assemblies) and not be

thereby put in mind, that is a matter of great concernment, about which they are so earnest? Nay, be mightily moved to prostrate himself in like manner, to worship the great Lord of all, and to make Him the same acknowledgments; which are as much due from him as from anybody else in the world?

Were a man never so dull, or backward to religious worship, it is impossible but he should be in some measure affected, when he comes among a multitude whose reverend and serious behaviour in the divine service, testifies the inward respect they have in their minds, unto that Almighty Being whom they so devoutly worship. It would certainly not only put him in mind of his duty; but incline him, with the like signs of humble and hearty devotion, to cast down himself, in His blessed presence.

And the greater signs of ardency of desire, and warmth of affection, there appears in those with whom we are assembled, the more feeling we shall naturally have of it ourselves: it being impossible to be quite cold by the fire

side, and to have no touch of zeal, when we are in the company of those, who manifest a vigorous flame of divine love in their hearts.

Besides, it is a comfortable sight barely to behold a great company gathered together, to own one and the same Father; who therefore cannot but look upon one another as brethren.

This is St. *Hierome's* observation, In iv. Galat. “the greater joy arises in every heart, by the very mutual sight of each other.” For so it is when friends meet together; they rejoice to see the faces one of another; they bless the occasion that brought them into one and the same place, and the more there are of them, the greater rejoicing is there among them.

Now joy enlarges the heart, and dilates our spirits; it makes them spread so much, that sometime we can scarce contain them, but are transported beyond ourselves. As on the contrary, sorrow and sadness contracts and shrinks up the spirits; flats and deadens them so much, that we have scarce any life left in us. Upon which account the spiritual joy and gladness I

spoke of, arising from the sight of so many Christian neighbours and friends, is a very great help to us in our devotion ; making us to pour out our souls, as the Psalmist speaks, with the more enlarged desire. It is but a dull and melancholy thing to be alone ; in comparison with the cheerfulness, which a great company, of the same mind and spirit, naturally excite in each other's breasts.

By which we may understand also the advantage of full assemblies in our churches ; which look more lovely, and therefore quicken more than a thin, scattered congregation. Which is a damp to Christian spirits, because it is a very sad sight to behold the divine service neglected, as it is, where they are but few that come together, to do God honour.

The sum of this argument is, that as no man is so warm alone as in a crowd, so our spiritual fervour is more quickened in an assembly of pious worshippers, than it is apt to be when we are retired by ourselves. Where we ought indeed to awaken our thoughts, and stir up our affections ; but it must be acknowledged

that we want then a great help and spur thereunto ; which is the holy zeal of those who join with us in the same petitions in the public assemblies, especially the seriousness, the gravity, and earnestness of him, who ministers the service of God there : which together with the authority of his office, the sacredness and majesticness sometimes of the place, set apart entirely for such services, is apt to raise in us more ardent devotion, than we can easily raise in ourselves alone.

IV. But if we had the same advantages of this kind when we are alone (which we have not) yet there is one more, which wholly arises from our frequenting the public assemblies. And that is the good example we give to others ; who may be hereby moved to become religious.

What we do alone, nobody sees ; nor is it intended that they should, but rather that it should kept be secret. And therefore it can be no inducement unto others to do their duty ; but is the bare discharge of our own. For which cause it is the less valuable, because

it doth less good, for that is the best thing, which doth the most universal good. By which measure, if we judge of Prayer, we must prefer the public; whereby others are put in mind of their duty; nay, attracted to it by our example: whereas we ourselves alone are profited by what we do alone.

It may be said indeed that we do good to others by praying for them. But this is a very small good in comparison; because it is more than they know; and while we neglect the public service, we do them more mischief, than we can be supposed to do them good, by our private Prayers. For we bring religion into contempt, when it hath few or none that attend the public offices of it, and we let them want, as I said, the force of example, to awaken them out of that careless neglect of God, which is too common in the world.

This is an argument that should prevail very much with all good minds, both to frequent the public service of God, and to behave themselves with an awful reverence therein. Which will have some effect upon the looser

sort, who now are hardened in their impiety, by the emptiness of our churches at the time of solemn worship, or by the negligence of their behaviour, who vouchsafe to attend upon it. A multitude sways very much either way, to incline men to be good, as well as to be bad. It is hard to resist numerous examples. They are able to bring devotion, as well as other things in fashion.

But if our example have not this effect on others, we have notwithstanding done the best we could to advance the service of God in the world; which will be a great comfort to us at present, and turn to our good account hereafter. We have let our light shine before men, we have testified openly to the truth of religion; we have expressed our affection to it, and reprov'd the impiety of those who regard not God; yea, we put a stop to the progress of this impiety; we hinder its growth and increase, by wresting a great argument out of their hands against religion, which is, that there are few who are religious.

If that then be good for us, whereby we do

the most good for others, which is an undoubted truth, we ought to be most in love with the public prayers. That we may invite others, by our constant attendance on them, to join with us in giving God the honour that is due unto Him, and free ourselves from the guilt of other men's sins, which we draw upon ourselves, when by giving little or no public sign of our devotion, we tempt them to become or continue irreligious. For as by performing our duty alone by ourselves, we do only ourselves good, but profit not others; who receive great benefit by our public devotion: so if we should at any time neglect our duty alone, we thereby hurt only ourselves; but by neglecting the public service of God, we hurt all that are near us by our pernicious example: tempting them to think that religion is only a private fancy, which some men have taken up, without any reason; for were it a reality all men would be concerned to maintain and uphold it, the best they can, in the world.

Thus I have given an account of the first argument for the necessity of public Prayers,

taken from the nature of Prayer itself: both as it respects God, and ourselves. By which it appears, that all those motives which I used in the first part of this book to persuade us to Prayer in general, are most efficacious to draw us to the public worship of God. There being no greater honour, than to be known to be the servants of the most High, by attending upon whose public service our minds are enlarged, unto great and worthy thoughts of God; and our affections stirred up to the highest admiration of Him, and love to Him, Who provides for so many as there wait upon Him, nay, dispenses His blessings to the whole universe, which we commend unto Him. Whereby our hope and confidence in Him is also exceedingly advanced, though we had never such great things to ask of Him; having the united force also of a great many petitioners to strengthen it, who joined together to solicit His favour. Which there likewise we are naturally inclined to seek in the most serious, and the most composed manner; it being a shame not to frame ourselves, when we appear

publicly upon such a weighty business, unto the most reverend deportment; which I have shown, is of itself alone a singular benefit we receive by Prayer to God. The sense of Whom, is the guide of our life, and the stay of our heart, which is both upheld, and raised to the highest degree by His public worship. Whereby, if we do not prevail for all those, whose welfare and happiness we seek; we maintain and increase notwithstanding in our own minds a lively sense, a high esteem of those graces and blessings, which we earnestly desire and ask for all mankind. For whose good as we ought to be concerned; so we are made more sensible of it, more affected with it, and solicitous for it by the public service of God, than we are inclined to be in our private devotions. This will appear in the management of the second general argument, propounded in the beginning of this discourse, for which I design the next Chapter.



CHAPTER XIII.

PUBLIC PRAYERS MOST SUITABLE TO THE NATURE OF MAN.

I PROCEED now to consider the nature of Man, as I have done the nature of Prayer; from whence we shall more fully learn the necessity of God's public service, and that it is to be preferred before all other.

Prayer being a natural duty (as I have proved in the beginning) arising from the necessity of our own being, which is precarious and dependent on another, who ought therefore to be continually acknowledged by us; it will easily appear from thence, that it ought to be public, and not only alone by ourselves; because nature hath formed us to society, without which we cannot be preserved in safety. From whence innumerable arguments may be deduced for our public assembling together, constantly to worship that Almighty Being;

who hath thus, by the very laws of our creation, disposed us to join together for our common preservation. For,

I. We cannot but see, at the very first mention of this, that we being made to have society one with another, should above all things have society in Prayer to Him that made us, and continually maintains and preserves us.

For what can be more absurd than to have society in the lowest actions of human life, and not in the highest, which are of principal concern to us, for our conversation? It is such an absurdity, as if we should join together to save one another's houses, but not to save one another's lives. And yet there is far less difference between a building of wood or stone, and this excellent structure of our body, than there is between our worldly affairs, and those of our immortal souls. Which teach us, at the first thought of such things, that if we were made to live together in society, and not alone, it is a just reason that God should be acknowledged by us all together, who is the

founder of society ; and as we transact all our common concerns together, by meeting in a body ; so the business of religion especially (which is the cement of society, and the fountain of all justice and charity) should be thus transacted, and we should with a common consent meet together in one place, to adore and acknowledge Him, which is the greatest concern we have in this world, even for this reason, because it supports, as you have heard, a sense of Him, without which all society will be dissolved.

II. And there is the greater reason for this, because men are the only creatures here, that are endued with a sense of God and of religion : and therefore should above all things join in that, and study to promote it, which is most proper to them, and distinguishes them more than any thing else, from the brutes. In whom we see some faint imitation of reason and discourse, but not the least sign of religion. Which may well be looked upon as the discriminating property in man ; and makes us think that he may be better defined, a *religious*,

than a *rational* creature. This, at least, should be joined with the other, and He defined, a *rational religious* creature. For all definitions are taken from that, which most peculiarly belongs to every being; and there is nothing so peculiar to us, as a sense of religion. Which if we do not exercise together, we do not act like men; who in all reason, should join to maintain and promote that which is most proper to them, (*viz.* religion) more than anything else in the world.

For which end God hath given to us alone the gift of speech, which no other creatures have besides ourselves; that we should proclaim His praises, and make it known that we honour Him, and excite one another to the love of Him, the Supreme Being. Who needs no words to tell Him our thoughts; but is acquainted with the very beginning of them, before they are formed: and therefore hath bestowed upon us the faculty of speaking, that we may tell our thoughts unto others, and make them understand that we are religiously affected towards Him. Who, if He had intended

religion should be only a private business, might have made us without tongues, because He needs no language to acquaint Him with our desires ; but hears our very thoughts, and perceives the most inward motions of our souls. Which we have power to express in words, not that He may understand us, but for the benefit of others, that they may understand our sense, and know that we are lovers of God, and be stirred up by our Prayers, and Praises, and Thanksgivings, to the same devotion towards Him. Whence *David* calls his tongue “ his glory,” (Psal. lvii. 8.) because therewith he glorified God ; and, as it there follows, (ver. 9.) “ Praised God among the people, and sung unto Him among the nations.”

Thus St. *Paul* supposes, when he saith Prayers ought not to be made in an unknown tongue, because if they were, he that was not learned in that tongue, would not be able to say “ Amen,” 1 Corinth. xiv. 16. which word, “ Amen,” was then it seems pronounced, at the end of every Prayer, by the whole com-

pany ; for whom the public minister spake to God, and was as it were their mouth, in what he said. But though it was thus ordered to avoid confusion, and that it might be distinctly known by every body, what was said in the Church, (which had been impossible, if they had all spoken together) yet they thought themselves bound to signify and declare that he spake their sense, by saying, " Amen," at the conclusion of the Prayer he made. Which was as much in effect, as if they had said every word of it themselves ; for it was as much as to say, they approved of, and consented to the whole. And this every one did so audibly, that a great multitude being gathered together in a church, it imitated the voice of thunder, as St. *Hierom* tells us.

And, verily, it is a great fault that we do not all thus join in the public Prayers at this day ; not only by our bodily presence, but with our tongues, which ought to express our consent to those petitions and thanksgivings, which are offered up to God in the name of us all.

III. And there is a farther reason for com-

mon Prayer; because the blessings we enjoy in common together, are far greater than those we enjoy singly and distinct one from another. We all breathe in one common air, and enjoy the comfort of one common light; the heavens drop their fatness in common upon every man's fields and pastures: and, which is more than all the rest, the great blessings of order and government, (the benefits of which we all enjoy, by being knit in the same society, under the same governor,) make it highly reasonable, that we should join ourselves together, as one man, to acknowledge these common blessings, which make us all happy. For being made for society, and enjoying innumerable benefits thereby, (which this is not a place to mention particularly,) we have lost all sense of what we are, and what we have, if we do not think ourselves bound to give God thanks for them in one body, begging His pardon for their abuse, and beseeching their continuance.

I name not now the greatest blessing of all, which is the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, (in which not a few particular persons,

but *all* in general are concerned, it being the *common* salvation, as St. *Jude* calls it,) because it belongs to the next head; where we shall consider mankind, as a Church, bound to bless God above all things for His grace in the Lord Jesus.

Let us look at present only to the visible heavens, which encircle us all, and proclaim aloud, as the Psalmist speaks, the glory of God throughout the world. Behold the sun, that great minister of God, which preaches, as I may say, every where, and publishes, not to one place or country, but to the whole earth, the praises of the Lord. It is not a private whisper, but a public cry, which the heavenly bodies make; "there is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them. Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world?" which tell us what we should do, and call upon us to make the voice of His praise to be heard, as much and as far as we are able; Who hath appointed such illustrious creatures, to do us perpetual service.

Which is the meaning of the holy Psalmist, when he calls upon all creatures in heaven and in earth, both visible and invisible, to praise the Lord. (Psalm cxlviii.) That is, he excites himself and others, to give God thanks for them; and to acknowledge the praises which they continually give Him; His most glorious perfections, that is, which they declare and set forth, in the most public manner. For they speak to all, as much as they do to one, the most excellent, immense greatness, and goodness of the Lord, who in wisdom also hath made them all; and this we ought as publicly to declare: it being all that we can do for the honour of His name, but only live accordingly; which this also teaches us, and makes absolutely necessary, that we may eternally praise Him.

There is an excellent discourse I remember, in St. *Chrysostom* to this purpose, in his ninth Homily upon Genesis: where, shewing how God hath preferred mankind above all other creatures, he concludes with this exhortation. "Let us therefore give Him thanks for all

these benefits He hath heaped on us. This is no grievous, no burthensome thing which He expects from us; for what trouble is there in testifying our sense of His loving kindness, in confessing our obligations, in returning our thankful acknowledgments for them? Which He, who is all-sufficient in Himself stands in no need of; but we ought to learn thereby to love the author of all good, and not to be ungrateful, but study to live suitable to such a careful providence over us."

"Let us not, I beseech you, be negligent in this; but think with ourselves continually, both what the common benefits are we all enjoy, and the private ones which He hath conferred upon any of us; both those which are manifest and confessed by all, and those which are concealed perhaps, and proper to ourselves alone. And by all let us excite ourselves to give Him thanks, which is the greatest sacrifice, the most perfect oblation:" especially when we all join together (I may add) to confess His goodness, and declare the wonders He doth for the children of men.

“And whosoever he is, that hath these things continually in mind, and reflects upon his own meanness, as well as the immenseness of the divine mercy; how He governs us, and dispenses His blessings to us, not regarding what our sins deserve, but what is becoming His divine goodness; it is impossible, but he should humble himself before God, and have a broken and contrite heart. This takes down all pride; this lays all arrogance low; this teaches us to be modest, and behave ourselves with all humility of mind; contemning the glory of this present life, and designing the future good of that life which is immortal.” Thus he.

And we may understand how much more grateful it is to the divine Majesty, to have all this done in public, than only alone by ourselves; by that passage among others in the Psalmist; Psalm xxii. 22. “I will declare thy name among my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” Which the apostle applies to our Lord Christ, and interprets the words as if they were spoken by Him,

(Heb. ii. 12.) where he proves that Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee." Behold here, how he makes this the voice of Christ Himself; who taught us by His own example, how acceptable it will be to God the Father, and how profitable to ourselves, to praise the name of the Lord with the rest of our brethren, in the public assemblies, and proclaim both the benefits we have received from Him, and the duty which we owe unto Him.

IV. Unto which that we may be the more strongly excited, let us consider farther, that the blessings we most want, as we are sociable creatures, being public blessings, they ought, in all reason, to be sought in our common Prayers, as most generally needful for us all. For so you may observe that the apostle directing the service of the Church, in 1 Tim. ii. 1. 2. requires in the very first place, that "Prayers, Supplications, Intercessions, and Thanksgivings be made for all men, for Kings, and for all

that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Nothing he knew was of greater concernment to the good of the world, than to have governors, whom he elsewhere calls the "Ministers of God," preserved in their just authority, especially to be blessed with good governors, who might be conservators of peace and quietness, punishers of vice and wickedness, a terror to evil doers, and encouragers of those that do well. And therefore he ordains that this great thing should be asked of God, by public prayers, because it was of universal concernment, and of highest moment to every man's happiness; which ought to be preferred before any particular respects, unto which their petitions might be directed.

Agreeable to this I find in *Josephus*, that the ancient Jews looked upon it as their duty, when they offered sacrifice unto God, to pray in the first place, for the *common* safety, or salvation; and then, for their own *private* concerns. "For we are born, (saith he,) for communion and society one with

L. 2. contr.
Apionem.

another; and therefore he who prefers the common concerns before his own private advantage, must needs be, above all others, very acceptable, and dear to God." This passage, among others, is cited by *Eusebius*, and we may add to it, what the Hebrew doctors now tell us in their books, I. viii. de præpar. Evang. Sect. 8. that the last thing the high priest prayed for on the great day of expiation, just before he came out of the holy place, was this; that "God would not hear the Prayers of those who were in a journey:" that is, Prayers made for men's own private benefit, against the public interest; such as the prayers of those in a journey are wont to be, who desire fair weather, when all the country prays for rain.

But howsoever this was, it is plain by the apostle's words, that he would have those things principally asked of God, which related to the community; which ought therefore to be sought by their common Prayers and Supplications. And so they were anciently in the Christian Church, as we find in *Tertullian* :

(to name no other author) who describing the Christian assemblies, saith, “ We pray there for the emperors, and for their ministers, and for powers, and for the state of the world, Apolog. Cap. 39. for the quiet of things, and for the delay of the end of the world.” Which he had declared before more largely, “ We pray to the eternal God, for the health and safety of the emperors, to the true God, the living God, who made them emperors, and whom it concerns the emperors, above all things, Ib. Cap. 30. to have propitious to them, &c. to Him, we look up, and all of us pray always for them, that they may have a long life, a secure empire, a safe family, a valiant army, a faithful senate,” &c.

This was so known a practice, and it was so firmly believed in those days, that the peace and safety, the honour and prosperity of kings and kingdoms, depended very much upon the due performance of this daily service, that there are examples of heathen princes, who had so much faith, as to desire to have their safety commended unto God in the Prayers of

the Church. Which were instituted with such a peculiar respect, (it appears by *St. Paul*) to the welfare of princes, the support of their government, and the prosperity of their people; that they cannot be neglected, without endangering the good estate of the world. And may possibly be one reason, why the world hath been so full of disorder and confusion; because christian people have not applied themselves earnestly enough, in daily public Prayers (which are generally disregarded) to beseech God for the public good and tranquillity, but are wholly bent to the fulfilling of their own private desires.

V. And as we ought thus to join in Prayer, that we may recommend our common concerns, to the care of Almighty wisdom and goodness; so likewise, that we may by the common offices of religion, keep ourselves the closer knit together, in firm love and unity, in the same society. For nothing combines men so strongly, as religion, and the purer it is, the greater effect it hath for the stay and support of the commonwealth. Which hath made all Law-

givers (as *Aristotle* observes in his politics) to exercise their first care about religion ; because it is that which qualifies all sorts of men to be serviceable to the public, making governors (as Mr. *Hooker* I think speaks) apter to rule with conscience, and inferiors, for conscience sake, willingly to obey their governors.

It was an admirable saying of *Plutarch*, in his discourse against an Epicurean ; “ That a city may as well be built in the air, without any earth to stand upon, as a commonwealth or kingdom be either constituted or conserved, without the support of religion.” Take this away, and you take away the foundation on which the kingdom is laid ; and it can neither be erected, or being erected cannot stand, when this is gone. Now as religion is necessary to uphold states and kingdoms, so the public exercise of it is as necessary to uphold religion. Let the public assemblies cease, and religion will not long stand. But we shall soon lose it, if we do not meet together to join in the common offices of it, and we shall soon be tempted to have the less

concern for one another's safety and happiness, when we are not tied together by the bond of one and the same religion. In which when we heartily join to serve God, it makes us look upon one another as brethren, dear to the same God and Father of us all, and therefore dear to one another.

This the Psalmist represents, when he cries out in the beginning of Psal. cxxxiii. "Behold how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity." He would have all the Israelites to look upon themselves as brethren, being all descended from one and the same stock, and having also the same God for their Father. And then they dwelt together in unity, not merely when they lived lovingly, and unanimously pursued the same common interest, for the common good; but then especially when they all met in one and the same place to worship God together, with one heart, and with one soul; which linked them closer than any other bond could do, and provided best for their common security. For it appears by what follows, he chiefly aims at this

assembling themselves unanimously together ; as the words are in the Hebrew, “ O how good and pleasant is it, for brethren to dwell, even together ; ” i. e., to meet all at God’s house, as common to them all. Nothing more delightful, than to behold such a general assembly, which he illustrates by two similitudes. *First*, of the precious ointment which ran down from the head of the high priest, to the very skirt of his garment ; and then by the dew of heaven, which made the hill of Hermon, and the mountain of Zion (nigh to which the temple stood) exceeding fruitful. And then in conclusion he adds the reason why this was so joyful a sight, and so beneficial, “ For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore ” He pours down His blessings of all sorts, (as the heavens do the dew, and as the precious ointment ran down from *Aaron’s* head) upon a people that are thus unanimously joined together, in the worship and service of God ; Who only can make them happy (that is meant by “ life ”) and can make them so for evermore. In order to which, He took care His divine

service should be perpetually performed in the temple; whither they were to resort, to do their duty to Him, and to implore His grace and favour towards them. And I cannot think it fell out by chance, that next to the Psalm now mentioned, is immediately placed a solemn exhortation (in Psalm the cxxxiv.) unto the ministers of God, to attend constantly upon their duty in the sanctuary; there to praise the Lord, who made heaven and earth, and to give a blessing to His people, and pray for their prosperity out of Sion, as that Psalm concludes.

I end this with the observation of a wise man; that we, being members of a public body, ought to serve it the best we can. Now all the service we do, as members of it, is public service; which is far more worthy, than what we act for ourselves privately and distinctly, as much as a whole society exceeds the worth of any one man in it. And what service is there we can do it, like to that of maintaining God's true religion, by serious attendance, with due care and frequency, upon

the public offices thereof. Whereby we shall exceedingly promote the common good of all, and maintain society itself, by which we are kept and preserved in safety and prosperity.

For by doing public honour to God, we shall draw down public blessings upon ourselves. God Himself will bless us, as the Psalmist speaks. "He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children: ye are the blessed of the Lord, that made heaven and earth." (Psal. cxv. 13, 14, 15.) Observe the title He gives Himself, "the Lord that made heaven and earth," and you will not think it suitable to His super-excellent and transcendent Majesty, to have His worship confined to your closets, or to your private houses; but make it as public as the heaven and the earth are, which are exposed to the view of all. In that spacious temple of His (as the ancients were wont to call the world, of which the temple at Jerusalem was an imitation,) He is to be magnified, and praised as openly, and with as great multi-

tudes, as can possibly meet together ; that we may not seem to worship some little, petty deity, but the universal Lord of all.

Thus I am fallen upon the argument wherewith I begun, which cannot be too often pressed, and hath a close connection with this other, which I have now handled. For He having formed us to live together in society, and to keep closely united in one body, for our common safety and preservation, teaches us thereby to own Him as the common parent of us all ; and to contrive the best ways we can, whereby we may acknowledge Him so to be. And there is no way like this of meeting together in the greatest multitude that can assemble, to magnify and praise Him with one voice for His goodness ; and declaring the wonders He doth for the children of men, commend ourselves and all our concerns, unto His most powerful protection, “ by Whom kings reign, and princes decree justice.” And therefore He ought to be sought for their guidance and direction, protection and safety, and to be acknowledged, as it is in the Collect for our

king, to be the "High and Mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only ruler of princes; who from His throne beholds all that dwell on the earth." And they are all (as the prophet most admirably expresses it) "as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity," in comparison with His incomprehensible greatness; who, as that great king Nebuchadnezzar publicly acknowledged, and desired all nations and kingdoms should take notice of it, is, the "High God, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation."

So he begins the proclamation he caused to be made of his humble devotion to the divine Majesty, by whom he had been abased as low as the beasts of the earth, Dan. iv. 2, 3. After which he tells all the world, "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doth according to His will in the army of

heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what dost thou ?” ver. 34, 35. And then concludes this declaration in this manner ; “ Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven : all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment ; and those that walk in pride, He is able to abase.” (ver. 37.)

A voice worthy of a king, and worthy to be published throughout all the world, and therefore he made the declaration, wherein it was contained to be sent to “ all people, nations, and languages, that dwelt on all the earth,” ver. 1. that is, throughout all his wide empire, to all the parts of the earth, where his authority reached, and his words would be revered ; that they might magnify this great King of heaven and earth, together with him.

That was the end of it, and it is one of the most public pieces of devotion that we ever read was performed by any man, arising out of this sense, with which he was possessed in those ancient times, that God is to be honoured, blessed and extolled publicly among, and

by all people; to whom he thought himself bound to shew the signs and the wonders, which the most High God had wrought towards him. And, "how great (saith he) are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders!" ver. 3. He was not able to tell, but made the best, and the most ample declaration of them that he could, in this imperial decree, which he caused to be proclaimed every where.

By all which we may easily be convinced, in what gross errors two sorts of people live.

First, they who imagine, that God may be served as well at home, as at the church. Such men neither understand the nature of God, nor the nature of religion, nor their own nature; which teach them quite otherwise, and instruct them also to frequent the public assemblies, where they have opportunity so to do.

Secondly, for that is another palpable error, to think that it is sufficient if we come on the Lord's day to testify that we do not forget God, though all the week beside, we take no

notice of Him, but constantly neglect His public service, when we are invited to it, and have leisure to attend it. We forget the many public, common blessings we daily need, and daily receive; which ought to be as publicly every day implored and acknowledged in our common Prayers.

Let the foregoing considerations be duly pondered, and they will persuade you, both out of love to God's honour, and out of love to your own good, to join, as often as you can, your Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings, with the whole Church of God; and to make our assemblies as full as you can, both on the Lord's day, *and every day of the week*. Whereby you would declare your *constant* dependence on God, and acknowledge how "He daily loadeth you with His benefits;" and draw down public blessings in abundance, upon the Church and kingdom where you live; and do credit to our holy religion (which, alas, now looks in many places as if it were despised) and not only do credit to it, but both help to support it, and also promote and pro-

pagate it, to the honour and praise of the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth, “unto Whom be the glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.”^a Amen.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE NATURE OF A CHURCH REQUIRES THERE
SHOULD BE PUBLIC PRAYERS.

I PROCEED now to the third head of arguments, whereby a Christian should be most of all moved to his duty : and that is, to consider the nature of the Church, which both requires public assemblies, and makes the service performed in them far more acceptable than private Prayers can be.

And here let it be considered in general, that the very word we translate *Church* in the Holy Scriptures, signifies in the Greek language, an *assembly* ; a company of persons met together, and that publicly, upon the public business, or occasions. The first time but one, we meet with this word in the New Testament, it is used in opposition to a single person, alone, by himself, or to one or two more beside him. Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

“ If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone, and if he will not hear thee, take one or two more, &c., and if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church :” that is, to that solemn assembly which sat to judge causes, and unto which was the last resort, so that, if he did not hear them, he was to be looked upon “ as a heathen man and a publican.” And, the truth is, it signifies any sort of assembly or concourse of people ; which was among the Gentiles as well as the Jews. For in the xix. of the Acts, when all the city of Ephesus was in an uproar, and ran together into the theatre, crying up Diana, this general concourse is thrice called their assembly, ver. 32. “ Some cried one thing, and some another, for the *assembly* was confused,” &c., (ver. 39.) If you inquire of other matters it shall be determined, “ in a lawful *assembly* :” and ver. 41. having thus spoken, “ he dismissed the *assembly*.”

Now this being the very notion of the word Church ; the Christian Church, which Christ hath called, is an assembly of men and women

met together to worship God by him, to give Him thanks for all His benefits, and to implore His grace and mercy to them and to all the world. It is an assembly or company of men, as much as any other; but our Saviour's kingdom being not of this world, the assembly which He appoints, is not to meet for civil ends and purposes, but for religious. And the great thing in all religion, is the devout worship of God, and giving Him the honour due unto His Name; for which the Church, (i. e., Christian assemblies,) being founded, it is a clear demonstration that this worship, is not so well performed alone by ourselves, as in these assemblies. For here we act most like Christians, that is, like members of the body of Christ, which is His Church. With which whosoever doth not join, he is no longer a Christian, because he is not a member of the body of Christ, which is a company joined together, to have fellowship with God and one with another, in all holy duties, of which Prayer, Thanksgiving, and Praises are the chief. For though there they receive Christian instruction, yet that is

not the principal business for which they assemble; as appears by St. *Paul's* words to *Timothy* before mentioned, 1 Tim. ii. 1.

If we could make Christian people sensible of this, they would immediately yield the public worship of God, to be that, which of all others, He most designs to have continued in the world, and consequently be most affected towards it, and constantly frequent it. And how should they remain insensible of it, if they would but consider duly, that it is implied in their being Christians, members of Christ's body, which is His Church. Which being nothing else but an assembly of men, devoted unto Christ, met together for religious worship, they are not a part of it, if they do not assemble with it. That is, they are not Christians, nor will any of their private devotions be acceptable unto God, being set in opposition to the public because they go about to destroy the very body of Christ, which is His Church; whose very being consists in assemblies, and not in separated worship alone by ourselves. Which private worship is then acceptable unto God,

when performed by a true member of Christ's body, that is, by one who attends upon the public assemblies; by which he procures acceptance for his secret and private services. Which are so far from being most acceptable, that we cannot reasonably think, they are acceptable at all, when they are set in opposition to the other, or when the other is constantly neglected.

If I knew how to make this plainer, I would do it, because it is a matter of great importance, that we may not be guilty of neglecting the public worship of God, where it may be enjoyed. For so far as we neglect this, we cut ourselves off from the Church; which is the body of Christ. That is, we cease to be Christians, and become bare natural men and women; for Christians are made to worship God together in a body, of which every particular person is a part, which cannot subsist but in conjunction with the rest of the members of that body.

Perhaps this will be better understood by considering how we come to be Christians.

Which is not barely by belief in Christ, *but by receiving baptism* ; where, professing faith in Him, we are admitted into the Christian society and communion, to partake of those blessings, which are bestowed by Christ upon the Christian fellowship. But then, we must continue therein, by living like Christians ; and particularly by assembling together continually for Christian worship ; otherwise we renounce our baptism, which admitted us into a society, and not to act separately by ourselves alone. In which society, if any man behave himself so scandalously, that he is thrust out of it, he is denied to have communion with them in their Prayers, all the time he remains so cut off from the Church. Which is a demonstration, that to have a communion with the faithful in Prayer, is the very thing unto which we are admitted by being made Christians ! it being the thing of which men are debarred, when they are turned out of the Christian society.

For the farther manifestation of which great truth, which I have thus explained in general, I shall in the following chapters offer several

particular considerations, which deserve to be seriously pondered in every Christian's thoughts.



CHAPTER XV.

OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR, THE FOUNDER OF THE
CHURCH, TEACHES US THIS DOCTRINE.

I. **A**ND first of all I desire it may be considered, that our blessed Lord doth plainly suppose this notion of a Church, that is, of religious assemblies, in the very Prayer He taught His disciples. The first words of which being, "*our* Father," not "*my* father;" are an indication, it was not made for a single person only, but for a company of men, joining together in their petitions to God. Who are put in mind by this expression, when any of them says this Prayer alone by himself, that his Prayer is at that time acceptable; because he is a member of the Church of Christ, and holds communion with the rest of his Christian brethren. There can be no other reason given, why we say, "*our* Father," even in our closets, but that we pray as part of a body, and

hope to be heard, because we are in union therewith, and not divided from it, and therefore stand bound, as oft as we have opportunity, to communicate with it in Prayer, and all other holy offices, when it meets together for that purpose.

II. And therefore we may farther observe, that Christ most especially promises His blessed presence in such public assemblies, Matt. xviii. 20. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That he speaks of their being assembled in His name for Prayer, appears from the foregoing verse, where He saith, "if two of you agree on earth as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done," &c. And the word gathered together, shews He speaks of public Prayer; such as used to be in the Synagogues; unto which the word, in the Greek, alludes. And two or three so gathered together, are put for any number whatsoever, but rather mentioned than any other greater number, that Christians might not be discouraged, though they could meet but in very

small companies, by reason of the difficulties and distresses they laboured under, in the beginning of our religion.

The rule of the synagogue was (as Dr. *Lightfoot* and others have observed) that unless the number of ten persons, who were of years, were gathered together, it was no assembly, nor could there be any Prayer. But our Lord would not have His Church thus abridged, in this high privilege of Prayer; knowing (as Mr. *Thorndike* observes) it might so fall out, that such a number of His disciples could not get together; either because of the persecutions, which scattered them abroad, or because there were but few (suppose only two or three) as yet converted in a place where the gospel was preached. Who, if they did unanimously agree in common petitions, our Saviour promises should find, notwithstanding their small number, that He would be present among them.

That is the blessing promised to their consent and agreement in common Prayer.

Which is not to be understood, as if He would not be present with a good Christian, when He prays alone; but the meaning is, that then, when they joined in common Prayer, He would be more especially present. For if our Lord Christ have a love to every Christian soul, and delights to have its company, then is He much more pleased with a great number of them, who present themselves together to seek His grace and favour. They are more welcome to Him, their company is more lovely, the sight of them more amiable, and they are more beloved of Him, and prevail for greater tokens of His love.

And thus all wise Christians, ancient and modern, have understood it. I will name one of later times, for there is no doubt of the ancient. "But as for sacred assemblies, in places appointed and deputed for that purpose, we have a very great veneration; and highly approve and love them, for we believe Christ to be more present with us, when we are met in conjunction together." They are the words of *Peter Martyr* upon Gen. xxviii. 12.

And here it may not be unfit to note, for a fuller explication of this matter, that the greatest blessings have then been bestowed, when God's people were at their public Prayers: which is a mighty argument to frequent them, in hope then to prevail far more, than we can in our private addresses to Him. In the Old Testament the examples of it are many; particularly in 2 Kings iii. 9, 10. where you read that the hosts of the three kings being ready to perish, both man and beast, for want of water, and the Prophet *Elisha* undertaking to furnish them therewith, "it came to pass in the morning, when the meat-offering was offered" (which was the time when all the people were at their Prayers in the temple) "there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water," ver. 20. Why did it come at this time rather than any other, but to honour the public Prayers and Sacrifices, and to let them know what great benefits they might receive thereby, if devoutly attended.

And when there could be no assemblies at

the temple, in the time of their captivity, yet they praying then privately with respect to it, as members of that Church, God was pleased to answer their petitions, at that very hour, when public prayers had been wont to be made at that place. For it was "about the time of the evening oblation," that the angel Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly to *Daniel*, as he was "speaking, and praying, and confessing his sin, and the sin of the people Israel, and presenting his supplication before the Lord his God." Dan. ix. 20, 21. And the tidings he brought him, were the most joyful that ever had been heard; for they were the very same, which the same angel afterwards brought to the blessed virgin, concerning the birth of our Lord Christ, to lay down His life for us.

And in the New Testament, you may observe, God sent His angel to bring St. *Peter* out of prison, after a miraculous manner, delivering him out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews; while many were gathered together

praying. Acts xii. 12. We read in ver. 5. that "prayer was made without ceasing" (or instant and earnest prayer was made) "of the Church unto God for him:" and in the very time when many, that is, the whole Church were gathered together, that is, in the time of common Prayer, God sent salvation to him. Uponⁿ which words St. *Chrysostom* occasionally reflecting, cries out; "if the Prayer of the Church was so available for *Peter*; if it rescued him out of prison who was a pillar of the Church; how comes it about, that thou hast no sense of its power, but despisest it, and settest it at nought by thy neglect of it? What excuse canst thou make for this? especially, when if there be a sermon, we see a crowd of people, and the church as full as it can hold? Oh, says one, I can pray at home, but I can hear sermons no where but in the church. Vain man! thou deceivest thyself. Thou canst indeed pray at home; but thou canst not pray so, as thou dost in the church; where there is such a multitude of fathers; where a cry is sent up to God with one accord. Thou

wilt not have such audience, when thou beseechest the Lord by thyself, as when thou prayest with thy brethren. For there is something more in this, viz., the concord, the conspiracy, and harmony of many in the same petition; the bond of charity; and the Prayers of the priests: for therefore the priests preside in those assemblies, that the prayers of the multitude which are weaker, may by the help of theirs which are stronger, go together with them into heaven. Add to this, what good doth a Sermon do, when prayer is not yoked with it? First Prayer, and then the Word, as the apostles say, "We will give ourselves continually to Prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Acts vi. 4. Thus St. *Paul* doth, praying in the preface to his Epistles, that the light of Prayer, like a torch, may usher in the Word. And if thou didst accustom thyself to pray with exact diligence, thou wouldest less need the instructions of thy fellow servant, God Himself illuminating thy mind, without his assistance. And if thou thinkest thy Prayer alone to be of such force, how powerful must it be, when

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joined with a multitude? This is far more nervous, and there is greater confidence and assurance in it, than in that which is made at home, and in private. So St. *Paul* thought, when he said, "He who hath delivered, and doth deliver, we trust, will yet deliver us, you also helping together by Prayer for us," 2 Corinth. i. 10, 11. So St. *Peter* also got out of prison; for "earnest Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him."



CHAPTER XVI.

WHICH IS FARTHER CONFIRMED BY THE PRACTICE OF THE APOSTLES, AND THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

III. **T**HE next thing I observe is, that according to the direction of our Saviour, and the encouragement He had given them, to expect His blessed presence among them; the apostles and the rest of Christ's disciples, immediately upon their Master's ascension into heaven, assembled themselves together for common Prayer and supplication; for so we read in the Acts i. 12, that as soon as He was gone out of their sight, and the angels had told them whither He was gone, "they returned unto Jerusalem; and when they were come in, they went up into an upper room" (the place, as shall be shewn presently, of Christian worship,) "and all continued with one accord in Prayer and supplication, with

the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.”

It was in their assemblies, we read in *St. John*, where our Saviour often appeared to them, presently after His resurrection, *John* xx. 19, 26, and we may well think it was for devotion that they assembled ; for it was on the first day of the week. But here we read expressly, after He was ascended into heaven, what they did in those assemblies. In which there being, one day, a hundred and twenty met together, they made solemn Prayer to God for direction in the choice of a new apostle, to succeed in the room of *Judas*, *Acts* i. 15, 24. But that which is most remarkable, you find in the beginning of the next chapter ; that when the day of Pentecost was fully come, “ they were all with one accord in one place,” and suddenly they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with tongues, &c. This great gift, whereby they were to gather a Church in all nations, as they had began to do at Jerusalem and thereabouts, came down upon them, when they were all met toge-

ther, for the service of God. The one place here spoken of, being no other than that mentioned before,—where “they continued with one accord, in Prayer and supplication.” The place where they assembled immediately after His resurrection, as I said just now, and in all likelihood, the place where our Lord eat His last supper with them before His passion. They did not look for this promise of our Saviour in their closets; but expected He would be in the midst of them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, when they were met together to wait upon Him for the fulfilling of His word.

IV. And accordingly you may farther note, that all they who were converted by them, to own Christ Jesus for their Lord and master, immediately joined themselves to them, to worship God in communion with them. Thus you read, how upon that very day, when they received the Holy Ghost, and preached thereupon unto all they could meet withal, the resurrection of Christ in their own language, “as many as received the word” (that is, believed on Christ) “were baptized” (that was the first

thing, they were admitted into the Church) and the effect of it was this, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in Prayers," ver. 41, 42, which is repeated again, ver. 46, "they continued daily, with one accord, in the temple," (worshipping God with the Jews) and then received the Eucharist at home; which was the proper Christian worship, wherein they joined together in their own assemblies.

And here it is very remarkable, that when their numbers were increased from three to five thousand, and there was a new descent of the Holy Ghost, to enable more besides those on whom it fell at first, to preach the word; this descent was at the time of Prayer, when they were assembled together for that purpose. Read Acts. iv. where you find, that the apostles being let go, from their imprisonment, they went unto their own company (ver. 23.) and reported all that the Chief Priests and Elders had said unto them. Which when the company heard, "they lift up their voice to God, with one accord, and said, " Lord, Thou art

God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is, &c. grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word," &c. ver. 24, 25, &c. "And when they had prayed (ver. 31.) the place was shaken where they were assembled together," (for Prayer you plainly see) "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

And as it was at Jerusalem; so in all other places where they settled a Church, it was for this purpose, that they should assemble to worship God together, by Christ Jesus. This was the very first or principal thing they ordained in such Churches; as those words to *Timothy*, which I have often named, sufficiently testify, 1 Tim. ii. 1. "I will therefore that first of all, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men," &c. Which assemblies the apostles required Christians not to forsake, no not in times of danger, Heb. x. 25. For that (you may note as I pass along) was to fall off from Christianity, as appears by the following words, ver. 26. For as

to become a Christian was to join themselves, to the Christian society, in such actions of religion, according to that you read of St. *Paul*, who being converted, “assayed to join himself to the brethren,” that is, to the assemblies of Christians, Acts ix. 26. So to cease to be thus joined in Christian communion, was to cease to be a Christian; and, in effect, to deny Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Saviour; Who hath made all that belong unto Him, to be a Church; that is, as I have often said, a company of men and women, assembling themselves together for Divine offices.

V. And that they might so do, there was, it may farther be observed, a certain place appointed for their assemblies, because there could be no assemblies, but they must be held somewhere or other; and they could not be held with any certainty, unless the place were determined, and known to be designed for that purpose. Of this we read so frequently in the holy writings of the New Testament, that it is a wonder any should make a question of it. I mentioned before the “upper room,” Acts. i. 11.

where the Apostles assembled, immediately after our Saviour's ascension; which Mr. *Mede* hath abundantly proved to be the settled place of their holy assemblies. Where, as I said, they were assembled again on the day of Pentecost, Acts. ii. 1. and the next day after, iv. 31. and was the *house*, where they are said to have continued daily breaking bread at home, Acts ii. 46.

Nor was this peculiar to Jerusalem, but in other cities they had the like. For at Troas also the Church was gathered together in an "upper chamber," Acts xx. 8. And at Corinth, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 20., the Apostle speaks of their coming together, "in the Church," and "into one place;" which he distinguishes from their own "home," ver. 34. And again xiv. 23. he speaks of the "whole Church coming together into one place." Which was no other, but that place where they commonly assembled for divine worship. And so those words of St. *Paul* to *Timothy* are to be understood, 1 Tim. ii. 8. "I will therefore, that men pray everywhere," &c. Which is spoken, saith *Beza*, in

opposition to assembling only at God's house at Jerusalem, unto which men were no longer confined, but might assemble in any place, where there was a house appointed for that purpose. So he expounds those words *everywhere*, "every place appointed, or set apart for holy assemblies to meet in; for St. *Paul*, (saith he) speaks of public Prayer, in the common meeting."

Thus St. *Basil* many ages before him explained the apostle's words, in answer to those who urged them to prove that Prayer was as well performed anywhere, as in the Church. "No such matter, these words, in *every place*, do not comprehend such places as are employed in common uses, and in profane, or perhaps filthy affairs, but enlarge the service of God beyond the compass of Jerusalem, unto any place in the world, which (according to the prophecy about sacrifice) is reverently devoted unto God, for the sacred performance of the glorious mystery."

L. 2. de Bap-
tismo Resp. ad
Q. viii.

And that these places thus designed for holy assemblies, were separated from common use,

and set apart only for this, was never doubted till this last age of fancy and vain conceit. Which hath imagined the separation of places to divine service only, to be a mere legal institution, that is, ordained merely by the law of *Moses*, which made the tabernacle, and afterward the temple, such a holy place. Whereas they were so made, in conformity to the common notions of human nature; and only made more holy and separate than any other place, by the residence of a visible Majesty and glory there. Otherwise there were holy, that is, separated places, before that time (though not so separate or holy as the temple was) and will be always to the end of the world; unless we suppose that men will lose all reverence to God, and let Him have nothing among us, which may be peculiarly called His own.

Now this thing alone, is an argument for public worship, that there hath always been a place appointed for divine service; which would have been needless, if men were not bound to assemble together to worship God, for then it might have been left to every one's

liberty, where they would please to do it themselves.

And this also shews the advantage, which public worship hath of all other. For being performed in a place set apart for it, where nothing else is done, at our very entrance into it we are naturally put in mind of God, and of our business there, which is only with Him, and so shall be more apt to be composed there, than in any other place, which we are wont to employ about other things besides the worship of God. Especially, since all wise men have ever endeavoured, that the service of God should be there performed, with the most solemnity and majesty that could be contrived; nay that the place itself should not be mean, but rather stately, and gravely adorned. For it is not with public Prayer, as it is with private. "In private" (as Mr. *Hooker* judiciously observes) "secrecy is commended, rather than outward show, whereas public Prayer, being the act of the whole society, requires accordingly more care to be had of external appearance. And therefore the very assembling of

men unto this service, hath ever been very solemn, and the very outward form of the place of public Prayer, hath been ever thought a circumstance of great moment to help devotion."

VI. To this may be farther added, from one of the texts now mentioned, that the apostle directs how they should exercise their spiritual gifts, in the holy place where they met together, and particularly the gift of Prayer, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. There were a great many extraordinary gifts then bestowed upon the Corinthian Church; every one of which the apostle informs them, was bestowed by one and the same Spirit; and bestowed by Him "to profit withal," xii. 7., that is, for the public benefit of the Church. And among the rest, there was a gift of Prayer, which was upon some occasions afforded by a particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and designed, as every one beside were, for the common good of all the faithful.

For if any man wanted the faculty of expressing those pious thoughts, which the Spirit

suggested to him, in the common language, which every body understood, the apostle shews his gift was of small value, and directs such a man to pray that he might be able, "to interpret," xiv. 13., into a language, that is, which was commonly understood. The reason of which was, because then his gift of Prayer would be of general use in the public assemblies; the advantage of which was to be preferred before any man's private benefit. So he tells them in the verse foregoing, (ver. 12.) that they who were zealous of spiritual gifts, should "seek that they might excel to the edifying of the Church." And in the verses following, (ver. 14, 15.) he saith, that if he himself should pray in an unknown tongue, "his spirit" indeed "prayed" (that is, the spiritual gift which he had, was therein exercised) but his "understanding was unfruitful," that is, others received no benefit by it, because they understood not what he said. And therefore he puts this question, "What is it then?" That is, what is it that we should desire in this business of Prayer? Which he

resolves thus, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." That is, this is most to be desired, when I, or any other, hath a Prayer suggested to him by the Spirit, that he may be able, not only to utter what it inspires, but to understand it also ourselves, so far as to make others understand it, by putting it into known and intelligible words. This is certainly best, not merely to have conceptions formed in us by the Spirit, but to utter those conceptions in such familiar and common expressions, that others may be profited by them. "Else," saith he, "When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that is unlearned, say, Amen?" ver. 18. That is, how shall he that understands not what thou sayest, because it is uttered in a strange language, give his consent and join with thee, in those petitions, and thanksgivings, though in themselves never so holy and good? Which the people did at the end of the Prayers, by saying, "Amen," so be it.

Which words are a demonstration he speaks of Prayer in *public*, or *common* Prayer. Which

from hence it is evident was then in greatest esteem, because, in comparison with this, the apostle undervalues even an extraordinary gift of Prayer, which a private person had, whereby he alone was profited. He prayed well, but others not being edified thereby, because they understood not what he said, it was a great diminution of its worth, and made it of less price in the apostle's account. And we all agree he had the spirit of God, and could as well judge what was best, as what was good. Now this was best in his judgment, to have the Prayer made public, that all might join in it, and not remain merely a private good.

And indeed that Spirit (it may be noted under this head) which enlivens the whole body of the Church, moves every member of it unto this, to join in its common offices, for the service of the whole. Which it is the very scope of the apostle to demonstrate, in those three chapters, xii. xiii. xiv. of the first epistle to the Corinthians, that they ought in every thing to act as members of a body, seeking the improvement one of another, by the exercise of

all their gifts, not separately, but conjunctly, so that all might partake of the benefit. And who-soever he is, that hath any sense of such a thing, as the body of Christ, whereof he is one member, he will never think that what he doth alone is as good as what he performs in fellowship, with the rest of the members. No, if he say the same Prayers, and offer the same Praises in private, which the Church offers in public, he cannot reasonably think there is no difference, nor imagine that both alike are God's service; because what he doth in conjunction with the rest of the body, is most agreeable to God's Holy Spirit, by which this body is linked together, and every part of it moved to act for the good of the whole.

I conclude this with the words of Mr. *Thorndike*; "To imagine that Prayers at home will be as acceptable to God, as those made in the Church with our brethren, is as if one should have fancied that the incense of the temple, spoken of Psal. cxli. 1. (which was a compound of several precious gums) made no other perfume,

Relig. Assembly
p. 173.

than the spices would have done, had they been burnt one by one."



CHAPTER XVII.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THIS
ARGUMENT.

VII. **G**OD hath also appointed a public order of men, to direct and govern Christian assemblies, and to minister therein ; both by giving Christian instruction, and by offering up the common Prayers of the Church to God, and blessing the people in His name.

This is another convincing argument, both that Christ designed public assemblies, because He hath appointed public ministers to officiate there, and that the Prayers made there, are to be preferred before private devotions, because there we partake of the service of God's ministers, the benefit whereof we lose, if we content ourselves with what we do at home.

There is nothing more apparent in the Holy Writings, than that our Lord would have such an order of men set apart, for His divine ser-

vice in the Church. Whose ordination by His special appointment and designation, is an assurance that their ministry therein is acceptable to God; as well when they offer the people's Prayers to Him, and bless them in His name, as when they deliver His word to the people, and teach them how to pray, and to perform all other duties of a Christian life. Both of these are necessary, and their office is designed for both, but especially for the first,—to minister the divine service of the Church. The principal of which is the Eucharist; wherein they dispense the most precious tokens of Christ's love to His body, the Church, by Prayers and by Thanksgivings to God for the redemption of the world, by that death of Christ upon the cross. Which ought to be publicly celebrated, because it is an annunciation of the Lord's death, wherein we publish, and show it forth, till He come; and never was administered, nor can be, by any other persons, but those whom our Lord hath entrusted to be *stewards of His mysteries*.

For whose Prayers, and public service in

the Church, if men have not a greater esteem, it is because they have no religion, or no true knowledge thereof.

For if they believed that God hath any ministers, (as He hath, if there be any such thing as religion) who are peculiarly sanctified, that is, set apart for His service, they would believe that God conveys some blessings by their ministry ; and look upon their ordination as a seal, that He who hath thereby appointed them to be instruments of His for the salvation of men's souls, will by these instruments effect the thing whereunto He hath ordained them, and particularly give men His blessing by their means ; and accept those Prayers which these servants of His offer up unto Him, for them, and in their name.

For that praying for the people is a special part of their work, we may learn from St. *James*, v. 14. where he directs those to whom he writes, when any man was sick, to " send for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him." Which no less belonged to their office, we may be sure, when men were

well, than when they were sick, being a part of their daily ministration, for the whole body of the Church. Whose weaker Prayers, as I noted before out of St. *Chrysostom*, being helped by the stronger Prayers of God's ministers, go up to heaven together with them.

All Christians indeed are called, "a holy and a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ Jesus," 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. but it is manifest by these very words, that they are not so singly, but in a body, when they pray and give thanks, together with him that ministers the divine service in the Church, the "spiritual house," of which the apostle there speaks, in which spiritual sacrifices were offered up to God. And since sacrifices were offered only in public, in the place God appointed for them, we may thence, I think, conclude, that our Prayers, praises, and thanksgivings are then only sacrifices, when made in our assemblies, and that then we act as priests unto God, and not at other times.

The principal sacrifice of Christians, I am

sure, is in its own nature a public service ; and is to be so esteemed, even when it is administered to the sick in private, who receive it as part of that body, which is supposed continually to offer this sacrifice. I mean the Holy Communion, wherein we offer to God, with prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, a commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross for us. For this we ought all to meet as frequently as we can, that we may conjunctly and openly acknowledge this benefit ; because, though this be the principal and immediate intention of this action, it hath respect also to that communion which we have one with another, as mutual members, and with Christ our head, as His body. So the apostle teaches us, when he saith, “ the cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. And therefore, since we are not members of the

same body, unless we be knit together in one ; and we are not knit together in one, but by the communion of the body and blood of Christ ; and we cannot have that communion but by assembling together, to eat of one bread and drink of one cup ; it is manifest to all that there is the greatest necessity of public assemblies, where this is the chief business, for which Christians should meet together in one body as oft as is possible ; and at all other times, beseech God to accept their sacrifices for the sake of that perfect sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, which Christ hath made, and which we commemorate.

Here also, in the public assemblies, censures were inflicted upon public offenders, as we learn from the apostle, 1 Corinth. v. 4. as well as from *Tertullian* in his apology ; and many such like things I might add to the same purpose, if I had room for them, and had not other material considerations to press, which ought not to be omitted.

VIII. Among which, this is not inconsiderable, that the public service of the Church,

by them ministered, is so acceptable unto God, that the angels, God's heavenly ministers, attend in such holy assemblies, and make a part of them. For this is the reason *St. Paul* gives, 1 Corinth. xi. 10. why a woman should cover her head in time of Prayer, that is, be in a humble and reverend posture; "because of the angels." Whose presence in the assembly of Christians, is a token of Christ's blessed presence, in the midst of them, according to His own promise before mentioned, Matth. xviii. 20. "For where the angels are said to be, there God is present," as the Hebrews observe; and not without good ground for what they say. For when *Jacob* saw angels in a vision, ascending and descending upon a ladder, which stood on the earth, and reached unto heaven, he said, as soon as he was awake, "how dreadful is this place?" (that is, with what reverence should I behave myself here?) "this is no other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He concludes God to be present, because the angels were, who are His ministers and attendants. And

accordingly we are to understand these words of the apostle, as intended to signify a divine presence among us, when we are reverently assembled together to worship God, in His holy places.

Which the ancient Christians looked upon, as a singular encouragement to attend upon the public Prayers; because then a Christian prays with the angels, ὡς ἂν ἡδὴ καὶ ἰσαγγελος, (they are the words of *Clemens Alex- L. vii. Strom.*
andrinus) as already, especially, p. 746.

at that time, equal even to an angel, and will not be out of the precinct of those holy guardians, when he prays alone, but then also have their company. Of which *Origen* Part II.
hath a set discourse, in his book of Num. 20.

Prayer, lately published; where mentioning the words of the Psalmist, among others, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him," &c. he thus proceeds, "it is probable that when many are assembled together sincerely to the glory of Christ, the angel of every one of them, there pitcheth his tent, together with him that is committed to his

charge and custody; so as to make a *double Church*, where the saints are gathered together; one Church of men, and another Church of angels."

IX. But if there was nothing of this in it, yet the "communion of saints" here on earth (which is an article of our creed) should invite us unto that public service. For how do we maintain communion with them, if we join not with those, among whom we live, in the assemblies of the saints? That is, of Christians, who are all a holy people to the Lord, by their solemn dedication to Him in their baptism, and by their holy profession, and meeting together continually for holy offices. Which if any man forsake, he is no longer holy, but profane; renouncing so far, the christian faith, which teaches him to keep the communion of saints, by having fellowship with them in Prayer, especially in the Eucharist, which is the communion of Christ's body and blood. By partaking of which, we have the nearest communion also one with another, being made one body, as I have said already, by partaking

all of that one bread, 1 st Corinthians, x. 17.

Communion indeed, or fellowship, is in one place, made a thing distinct, from “breaking of bread, and Prayers,” Act. ii. 42., and signifies, some think, communicating to each others’ necessities. Which notice of communion, if we understand to be meant in the creed, it makes no less to my purpose than the other. For we must consider that this was done in their public assemblies, whereby their communicating to the needs of their brethren became an acceptable offering unto God, together with their Prayers. This we learn from the 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Where St. *Paul* speaks of the collections for the saints, as a part of the business of the first day of the week, both there and in the Churches of Galatia. When they did not forget this well-pleasing sacrifice (as it is called Heb. xiii. 16.) but acknowledged God’s bounty to themselves, by the relief they sent to others; and by such a public contribution, maintained also a sense and fellow-feeling of one another’s condition, and made a profession that they all belonged

to one and the same body, though never so far distant one from another. The sense of which we are apt to lose, when we join not together in such actions of piety. Whereby brotherly love and kindness is likewise nourished, and we are knit together in the tenderest affection, while we look upon one another, not only as children of the same common Father, but as limbs of the same body. Who naturally, "have the same care one for another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26.

In this brotherly love, and in the same faith, some think the unity of the body of Christ entirely consists. But they should consider that this brotherly love and care flows from the unity of Christ's body, which consists therefore in the conjunction of every member with the rest, and keeping communion one with another, in all the common offices of religion, in Christian assemblies. From which whosoever departs, or refuses to join therein,

he breaks the unity of the body of Christ, which is His Church. And though he do the same thing alone, which is done in those assemblies, yet it is not the same thing in the account of Christ; who looks upon such a man as gone from Him, by going from His body, the Church.

X. I will add one thing more; which is, that the service of God, in the Church triumphant in heaven, is a public service: and they do not worship God separately, there, but join together in His praises. This we are taught by St. *John*, Rev. vii. 11, where after a great multitude had been represented to Him, which no man could number, of all nations and kindred and tongues; who stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, crying with a loud voice, and saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (whereby, no doubt, is signified the service of the Christian Church,) then it follows, that "all the angels also stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne

on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever." They said, that is, "Amen" to the Christian service, and also added their own; giving glory to God in one body (for it is the voice of *all angels*) as the Christian Church did.

Let this be seriously pondered, and we shall endeavour to approach as near unto them as we can; by joining, as they do, in one society of the Church, to worship God. For so doing, we join ourselves to the society also of the holy angels; as the angels, St. *John* here informs us, do to the society of Christian worshippers. They and we make but one body in Christ, in whom God "hath gathered together in one all things; both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;" and this unity consists, it is manifest by this vision of St. *John*, in their communion one with another, in holy offices: which the Church in heaven (where it is become most perfectly one,) doth most sacredly keep and preserve.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RECAPITULATION OF THE FOUR FOREGOING CHAPTERS, WITH SOME INFERENCES FROM THENCE.

LAY now all these things together ; that the Church in the very notion of it is an assembly of men and women called to meet together ; and therefore the Christian Church is such an assembly, called to join together in worshipping God by Christ Jesus ; who Himself hath supposed this, in the Prayer He gave His disciples : and hath promised his special presence, in such assemblies ; which the apostles constantly held, and there received the first and best fruits of His love, in the descent of the Holy Ghost ; which drew all converts every where, into the same blessed conjunction ; for which holy places were appointed, where they constantly assembled, and where the extraordinary gift of Prayer, was to be made common, or else looked upon as of little

value; where God hath appointed His ministers to attend, and there offer up the Prayers of His people, and bless them in His name; where the angels also are present, and delight to see us assembled, that we may maintain the communion of saints here on earth, and be fitted for the company of the blessed in heaven; who all join together in giving blessing, and praise, and honour unto Him, Whom we worship; Who is far exalted above all blessing, and praise, either of ours on earth, or of their's in heaven; consider, I say, all this, and then think what an error they live in, who make little or no account of the public assemblies, but imagine they can pray and serve God, as well by themselves alone. This is a most unchristian thought, directly contrary to the very frame of our holy religion, which therefore ought, with all diligence, to be exploded out of every one of our minds.

As for those who do not barely neglect the public service, but refuse to join in it, they are still in a far worse condition, having broken themselves off from the body of Christ;

which the ancient Church thought so heinous a crime, that they looked upon their Prayers as an abomination. For so I find in the council of Antioch, that such

Canon 2.

Christians were condemned, as going into any private house, prayed together with those who would not join in the Prayers of the Church. None of the Church were to join in their Prayers; if any did, they thought it equal to the crime of communicating with excommunicated persons. The like I find in the council of Laodicea.

Canon 3.
Canon 10.

And the canons ascribed to the apostles speak to the same purpose. And this sentence of those councils, is very conformable to the sense of the ancient Jews, whose maxim this was (as Mr. *Thorndike* observes)

“He that dwells in a city where there is a synagogue, and prays not there with the congregation, this is he who is called a *bad neighbour*.” And well may he be called bad, who will have no society in the best things; who cuts himself off, by his own act, from the congregation of the Lord; who will

Relig. Assembly, p. 173.

not afford his neighbours the help of his Prayers; who lives as if the world could be governed, without taking any notice of God, the supreme governor; who directly overthrows the Christian religion, and destroys the very notion of a church; who hath no regard to holy places, and slights God's ministers; who withdraws himself from God's special presence and protection, and defies all the blessed company of heaven. Among whom he can never hope to find any entertainment, nor to be received into the celestial habitations, having shut himself here out of the society of saints, and the place where God's honour dwelleth.

Would to God such things as these were seriously and deeply considered by us all, that our minds might be awaked to a diligent and constant attendance upon the public assemblies. Which our Lord hath taken the greatest care to establish, and unto which He hath also granted very high privileges, lest they should fall into contempt or neglect, through men's idleness, or covetousness, or conceited-

ness, or any other means whatsoever. Certain it is, if we had a hearty love to our religion, and understood it, we could not but be so in love with the public exercises of it, as EVERY DAY, if it lay in our power, to go into God's house, and there recommend ourselves, and His whole Church to His grace and mercy. For there is no way, it is evident from what hath been said, to uphold and support the Church, like to this; we being a church, by meeting together, to have communion in the same Prayers. Which the oftener we have, the more we look like a Church, and act like members of the body of Christ, who are combined and knit together, for mutual preservation. As on the contrary the seldomer we meet, the less there is of the face of a Church among us: which cannot be preserved from ruin, when the public assemblies are generally neglected, because the Church falls to decay, by that very neglect.

Let us therefore set ourselves to maintain the Church of which we are members, by maintaining public assemblies; and suffering no

day to pass without a solemn meeting in as full a body as we can make, for the duties of our religion. This would be both an ornament and a strength and establishment to our religion. The truth which we profess, would hereby be both honoured and confirmed, and appear with greater authority, as well as beauty in the eyes of all its adversaries; when they beheld the multitude, the unanimity, and the order and constancy of those that assert it. The better and gentler sort of them would be the more easily won to join with us, and they whose hearts are alienated from us, would be the less inclined to set themselves against us.

And, for the grace and favour of God, which is the chief thing of all, Christians may promise it to themselves for their protection against all their adversaries, when they constantly and earnestly seek it, with their joint prayers and supplications. Which will be powerful also for the settling such as are wavering in their religion; whom the constant authority likewise of a great number of faithful people, cannot but be of much moment to contain in

their duty, for men are ashamed to forsake a multitude, when they easily desert small numbers.

The ancient Christians were so possessed with this sense, that they looked upon their Prayers, as “the impregnable bulwark of the Church, an unshaken garrison; terrible to the devils, and salutary to God’s pious worshippers.” Insomuch that St. *Basil*, speaking of God’s gathering the waters together, which He called seas, and saw it was good, Gen. i. 16., falls into a pious meditation, how much more acceptable to Him, such a collection, or gathering together of the Church, must needs be, “in which the mixed sound of men and women and children, making a noise like the waves dashing against the shore, is sent up to God in Prayers. A profound calm and tranquillity shall preserve such a Church unmoveable. The spirit of wickedness shall have no power to trouble it, with heretical doctrines.” By which passage we learn, both how full their assemblies were wont to be, and that the Pray-

Chrysostom.
Tome 1 p. 757.

In *Hexameron.*
Hom. iv. sub.
fin.

ers were understood by all the people, who with one voice said the same that the priest did, (as we now do in our general confession,) and that they hoped for great security from their common supplications to God, for His watchful providence over them.

And thus our own Church, in the Second Collect for morning Prayer, by teaching us to look upon our "Eternal life as standing in the knowledge of God, and to esteem His service to be perfect freedom," inforces our resort unto Him continually for our defence in that service and knowledge, "in all assaults of our enemies." The effect of which it instructs us to hope will be this, "that we surely trusting in His defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord." This St. *Chrysostom* admirably represents, as his man-
Hom. in S. Lucianum. Tom. 1.
ner is, in a sermon upon an ancient martyr. "As a man that always stands upon a rock, laughs the waves to scorn, so he that enjoys the daily Prayers, and is moistened with the divine words, having seated himself as upon

the rock of a right judgment of things, will be carried away with nothing here, being raised aloft, out of the reach of all the affairs of this life. And that not only from the good admonitions he daily receives, but from the Prayers, and from the paternal benediction, and from the common convention, and from the love of the brethren, and from abundance of other things, reaping much benefit and spiritual consolation, he goes home laden with a thousand blessings, insomuch that a bride, in his opinion, is not so beautiful and amiable, when she sits in her bridal chamber, as a soul is wonderful and glorious when it appears in the Church, breathing forth spiritual graces :” which he compares to fragrant ointments. “ For he that is conversant there with faith, and diligence, carries away innumerable treasures, and though never so many dreadful things befall him, he will bear them all easily, being sufficiently furnished, out of the holy Scriptures, with patience and philosophy.” He means the wise thoughts, which the belief of the gospel puts into us.

For which reason it was that the enemies of our religion, bent their forces not so much against particular persons, as against their assemblies, which they endeavoured with all their might to destroy, as the nurseries of the Christian faith. Which being dispersed, they doubted not but the faith itself would be lost, in that disorder. They no longer looked upon Christians as a Church, when they did not meet together, but as so many scattered limbs of a body, which no longer subsists, when the members are distracted, and torn asunder. Against these strong holds therefore they laid their batteries, hoping when they were beaten down, they should presently triumph over their religion. Which they knew it was hard to overcome, whilst a great body of men remained, knit together continually for its support, by many bonds, and holy mysteries, and the strictest sacraments.

For which cause likewise it was, that Christian people could not be persuaded to omit their assemblies, no not in time of persecution, when there was the greatest danger, if they

held them. We learn so much from their very persecutors, particularly from the famous letter which *Pliny* wrote to the emperor *Trajan* about this matter; wherein we are informed, that, when it was not safe in the day time, they met before the morning light to sing hymns to Christ, as their God. To what shall we impute this zeal? Might they not have served God as well alone? No, they understood their religion better, than to be of that opinion, and knew it could not stand, if they did not thus join together to uphold it. Their enemies, they knew, wished for nothing more, than that these assemblies might be broken, which, whilst they continued, were the *pillar* and *stay* of the Christian truth.

And do we pretend to be Christians, and to love our religion, and to desire, nay hope for its safety and prosperity, and make so little account of these holy assemblies, that the smallest matter will hinder our attendance on them? Let us not, against the clearest demonstrations, persist in such a stupid error. But awaken, or rather inflame ourselves unto

such a degree of zeal, as to meet together daily, where we have opportunity for it, to give glory to God in His Church by Christ Jesus; and to commend His Church, as well as ourselves and families, to the protection of His good Providence, saying, "O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance." It cannot be imagined what satisfaction we should find herein did we make this our most serious business; and, instead of the excuses we now make for our negligence, give all diligence thus to adorn, confirm, and secure our most holy religion.

It cannot be denied indeed, that this hath been an error of long standing; for when the Church had rest from persecution, her children began, by degrees, to grow remiss and wanton. Prosperity and ease corrupted them, and they cooled so much in their first love, that many of them came but seldom, to do their duty unto God their Saviour. But this was an extreme great grief to their pastors, and brought the heaviest calamities upon Christian people. Hear how the often named Father bewails

this, "That the Church having brought forth many children, she could not enjoy their company, every time they assembled to remember our Saviour, but only upon a festival. When you are all full of joy to day, I alone am full of sorrow, and grieved at heart; to think that the Church which now hath such multitudes in it, will tomorrow be empty. O how great spiritual exultation, how great joy, how great glory to God, how great profit to souls would there be, if every time we assemble, we could behold the Church as full as it is at this solemn time? Do you not see how the mariners and pilots, when they are upon the sea, labour all they can, to get into their port? And we, on the contrary, love to be tossed up and down in the sea of this world; engaging ourselves in innumerable secular affairs, which so take up all our thoughts and our time, that here we appear scarce once or twice in the whole year. Are ye ignorant, *that as God made havens in the sea, so He hath made Churches in cities, that flying from the tumult, or tempest rather of*

St. Chrysoet. de
Baptism. Christi.
Hom. xxiv.
Tom. 1.

secular affairs, we may here enjoy the greatest tranquillity? And for this I may appeal to all your own consciences, whether you find not here such quiet and peace, that you may truly call the Church, the *spiritual haven* of the soul. For anger here gives no disturbance (the storms of passions cease) lust doth not inflame; envy doth not gnaw; pride puffs not up; nor doth the love of vain glory corrupt; but all these wild beasts are tamed, as by a divine charm, as soon as the hearing of the holy Scriptures enters, at every man's ears, into his soul, and lays all these unreasonable passions asleep. Who then will not judge them to be miserable wretches, that when they might be partakers of such great wisdom and grace, will not gather themselves together continually, and come to the *common mother of us all*, I mean the Church? For what more necessary business canst thou pretend? What more gainful meeting? Or what should hinder thee from letting us here have thy company?"

This is a lesson he repeats very often, parti-

cularly in a Sermon he preached a little after Whitsuntide, “ Where he complains that he had in vain persuaded them, at the last solemn assembly, to continue in their Father s house, not merely appear there on a festival, and then leave it. And therefore desires his constant auditors, that they would try to induce their neighbours, by representing to them, that though Pentecost were gone, yet the festival was not gone therewith. For every holy meeting, (saith he,) is a feast; as appears from the words of Christ Himself; ‘ Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.’ When Christ is in the midst of those who are assembled, what other demonstration, greater than this, would we have of a festival? Where there is the sacred doctrine and Prayer, where the benedictions of Fathers, and the hearing of the holy laws, where the meeting together of brethren, and the bond of sincere love and charity, where converse with God, and God speaking to men, how can there choose but be a festival, and a day of public rejoicing? For

Hom. v. de Anna
Tom. 2.

not the multitude, but the virtue of those that are gathered together, makes a festival; not the fine clothes, but the ornaments of piety; not a rich table, but careful provision for the soul. The greatest feast is a good conscience. And therefore we may keep a feast every day, if we will exercise virtue, if we will purify the conscience. For in what doth the great festival differ from this day, but only in tumult and noise, and in nothing else? For to-day you may enjoy the holy mysteries, and partake of other spiritual benefits, viz., Prayer, Hearing, Blessing, Charity, and all other things, and therefore it is as good a day as any."



CHAPTER XIX.

OF DAILY PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES, AND OF HOURS,
AND GESTURES OF PRAYER.

IT may be thought, perhaps, by some, that I go too far, in pressing a *DAILY attendance upon the public Prayers*, which they imagine is but a superfluous piece of devotion, a great deal more than needs; but if they would lay a very few things together, and consider them seriously, they would alter their opinion;

First, let it be considered that there was anciently, a morning and evening sacrifice, every day publicly offered to God at the temple; which was called the continual burnt-offering, ordained by Him on mount Sinai, Numb. xxviii. 3, 6. Exod. xxix. 42. *Secondly*, that such sacrifices were acknowledgments to God, and Prayers for the obtaining His favour, 1. Sam. xiii. 12. *Thirdly*, that the reiterated precepts of the gospel, which require us to “pray alway,” and to “pray without ceasing,”

were never thought by any Christian to signify less, than praying as oft as the Jews offered sacrifice ; that is, morning, and evening, which may, with propriety enough, be called, *praying continually, or without ceasing* ; as those morning and evening sacrifices at the temple, were called the continual burnt-offering. And *Fourthly*, that no reason can be given, why those sacrifices were publicly offered, which will not make it as necessary that we should have public Prayers ; which are most for the honour of God, I have proved before, and every way advantageous to us. And then we can make no other conclusion but this, that morning and evening Prayer *ought* every day to be offered to God in our public assemblies ; and that we *ought* to be glad of the opportunity to join therein, as the people did with the priest, who ministered in the temple. For when he was in the sanctuary at the altar of incense, praying, “ the whole multitude of the people were praying without, at the time of incense,” Luke i. 10, 11, 13.

All the people of the land indeed could not

possibly come thither every day to worship, but they had their synagogues in the country, where at the time of morning and evening sacrifice, they met together to pray, and hear the law of God read to them. And a certain number of men were likewise appointed from among them, whom they called stationary men, to attend constantly in their courses at the temple, in the name of the rest, whom they represented. Which things considered, we cannot think it fit to have no assemblies, but only on the Lord's day; especially when we observe that the ancient prophets expressly say, there should be as frequent devotion in the days of Christ, as there had been in former times. So we read in that famous prophecy, Psal. lxxii. 15. "Prayer shall be made for Him, (or to Him) continually (a plain allusion to the continual burnt-offering) and daily shall He be praised." Which, that it is meant of public Prayers and praises is evident, from the *offerings* which it is there said shall be brought to Him; and from the effect hereof in the 17th ver. "His

Dr. Lightfoot's
Temple-Service
c. vii. Sect. 3.

Name shall be continued for ever: and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." Thus the Chaldee Paraphrast understood those words, ver. 5. "They shall fear Thee, as long as the sun and moon endure throughout all generations;" that is, saith he, they shall in all ages, "pray before Thee," (which is comprehended in the fear of God, whereby is often meant His worship and service) "with the sun, and before, or in the presence of the moon." As much as to say, in the morning when the sun arises, and again at night, when the moon shines, they shall by devout Prayers express their reverence to Him, the king of the world.

Where people, indeed, in country villages, lie scattered one from another, and have abundance of business which call them several ways, it cannot be expected, that there should be every day such assemblies. But in cities, and in market towns, where they live nearer together, and have, on most days, a great deal of leisure (which to my knowledge is spent by many people there, in mere idleness or pleasure) it is of

absolute necessity, if we will do our duty completely to God our Saviour, that assemblies should be maintained and frequented, as they anciently were and still are in most parts of the Christian world. For the apostles of Christ immediately upon His ascension into heaven, persisted in the ancient practice of public devotion, being "continually (i. e. at morning and evening Prayer) in the temple, praising, and blessing God," Luke xxiv. 53. And after, by the power of the Holy Ghost coming on them, they had settled Churches, we read the "four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders (by which are certainly meant the governors of the Christian Church) rested not day and night, saying, holy, ho'y, holy, Lord God Almighty," &c.; that is, morning and evening they fell down before God, and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever. Which practice ever since continued in the Church; which, in that heavenly hymn, commonly ascribed to St. *Ambrose*, hath constantly said, "day by day we magnify Thy name."

For which end certain hours, as well as a

certain place, have been always appointed, that men might so order their other affairs, as to be able to mind this great business, of giving thanks and praise to God, the Creator of all, and imploring His blessing on them in their several callings and conditions, and on their Church and country, and finally on the whole world. It is so sure that the Jews had such set hours of Prayer, that I do not think fit to say much of a matter so well known. I will only note that they were the third hour, the sixth, and the ninth. Which the Christian Church afterward observed, and that from the example of the apostles themselves. For St. *Peter* even when he was not at Jerusalem, went up to the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour, i. e., twelve o'clock. Which we cannot doubt was his usual custom, and as little doubt that it was the custom of the other apostles; and by them everywhere propagated throughout all the Churches. Which, the ancient writers of Christianity tell us observed those very set hours of prayer. So *Clemens* in his Constitutions, vii. 24. and *Clemens Alexandri-*

mus in L. vii. of his *Stromata*, where he calls them the set, appointed hours." And *Tertullian* in his book of Fasting, chapter 10. *Origen* also in his book of Prayer, proves from several scripture examples, that it ought not to be made less than three times every day. N. 38. And that such was the practice in *St. Chrysostom's* days, I shall have occasion to shew, in the end of this chapter, which is still continued in our great Churches everywhere. I will here only transcribe the words of *St. Hieron* upon the vi. Dan. 10. "There are three times, in which our knees ought to be bowed to God, at the third hour, the sixth, and the ninth, as the ecclesiastical tradition instructs us. At the third hour the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles; at the sixth *Peter* went up to pray in the upper-chamber; and at the ninth, *Peter* and *John* went up together into the temple."

Whether the public service of God was everywhere celebrated three times a day, or only upon the Lord's day, and in great cities every day, may justly be questioned. And I incline

to think it was not every day, in all places celebrated more than twice ; because the constitutions, ascribed to the apostles (which are undoubtedly very ancient) enjoin no more, but morning and evening Prayer. The words are very remarkable, directed to the bishop to whom they say, “ command and exhort the people, to come continually to Church, morning and evening every day, and not to fail at all ;” and then they mention in the same place, three services upon the Lord’s day, as more solemn than all the rest. Which is exactly suitable to God’s appointment among the Jews, who had daily the morning and evening offering, and on the Sabbath day, another offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, as we read expressly, Numb. xxviii. 9, 10. They had indeed at the temple, other offerings every day, about twelve o’clock ; but they were not the sacrifices of the whole congregation of Israel, as the morning and evening sacrifices were, but the sacrifices of particular persons, on particular occasions. And accordingly all Christians prayed publicly twice every day,

L. 2. Const.
58.

morning and evening, and had another hour also for private Prayers, which was about noon, conformable to that of the Psalmist, "Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice." Psal. lv. 17.

It must not here be forgotten, there were likewise two of the week days more solemnly observed than the rest for public Prayers, viz.,

Wednesdays, and *Fridays*, as hath been elsewhere proved. On which days there were three services, in some places, as on the Lord's day; and in all places, they took special care that nothing should keep them then from the public assemblies, how negligent soever they were at other times. And the devouter sort also fasted, on those two days, that they might have more time for Prayer, and be excited to greater fervour in it, by a deep sense of their own unworthiness, of the least of God's blessings.

And do we now think to please God, and to preserve our religion, without any of this care, either on those days, or on others, but only on

Treatise of Repentance, p. 113.
(Edit. 1839.)

the Lord's day? Then the Christian Church in all ages, till these later times, hath been too officious, though it followed the plain instructions, and the best patterns of the holy Scriptures. Which have been so universally understood to enjoin a daily public service of God, that there is no Christian country, that I can find at this day, by whom this tribute is not paid unto Him. All the Eastern Christians

(as a learned divine and great traveller hath informed us) Greek, Armenian, and others, constantly perform it; in the west, the Church of Rome still observes this practice:

Dr. Basire's
Funeral Serm.
for the Bishop
of Durham. p
95. And see
Chemnitius Exam;
Concil. Trident. pars 4. p.
160, and 162.

and in Germany both the Lutherans and the Calvinists have their public offices and full congregations. So we have in these islands, and in many places, full congregations also; though in others alas! either no public assemblies, or scandalously empty. Which is a very great shame, as the forementioned Dr. Basire speaks, that when now under the gospel, God doth not require our lambs (which were offered publicly twice every day by the

Jews) we should not daily give Him the *calves of our lips*, as the Prophet's phrase is, that is, pray to Him, and praise Him, and give Him thanks in the public congregation.

Why the Reformed Churches in France did not thus constantly assemble, as they do in Germany, it is not my business to inquire. Mr. *Calvin* I am sure both approved of this practice, and wished it were restored, in more places of his works than one; by noting which, what I have said will be confirmed, and some reason also given of this omission. For hav-

Comment in iii.
Acts 1.

ing observed, that God appointed a morning and evening sacrifice to be offered among the Jews, and thereby taught them to begin and close the day with invocation and the worship of God; and (a little after) that He also appointed *stated hours* for these sacrifices, to teach us that the Church cannot be without a certain discipline; he then concludes, "and at this day, if too much sluggishness did not hinder, it would be useful every day to hold such assemblies." And in his discourse upon the fourth commandment

he not only asserts, that ecclesiastical assemblies are enjoined by God's word, and that experience sufficiently shews their necessity ; and that the days and times must be stated and set, or else they cannot be at all, but in answer to those who objected " Why do we not rather meet every day, that distinction of days may be taken away ?" He thus replies, " Would to God we were able so to do ; for certainly it was a worthy spiritual wisdom, which spared a little proportion of time every day from other business, for God's service. But if we cannot obtain from the infirmity of many, that daily assemblies may be held, and respect to charity doth not permit us to exact more of them ; why do we not yield obedience to that which we see by the will of God is imposed upon us ?" And he thus concludes his explication of that commandment. " This general doctrine is especially to be held, that holy meetings be diligently and religiously observed, and such external helps constantly used, as may serve to support and cherish the service of God ; lest

L. 2. Institutionum C. viii.
Sect. 32.

religion, either fall to the ground, or languish among us.”

To which I think fit to add, what his opinion was concerning set times of Prayer; for his words are very instructive. Upon Psalm lv. 17. his note is, “That from the mention there, of morning, evening, and noon, we may gather that pious men had ‘*statis horas,*’ set hours for Prayer in those times. Which good men observed in their private devotions, because then the public service of the temple was performed by God’s appointment. For the daily sacrifice was offered every morning and evening; and the mid-day, (saith he,) was appointed for other sacrifices.” The reason of which, he gives upon ver. 18. “Because we are backward to this duty, therefore God in fixing certain hours of Prayer, intended to cure this infirmity. Which same reason ought to be extended to private Prayer, as appears by this place, with which the example of *Daniel* agrees.”

And upon that practice of *Daniel*, he thus writes in his notes on Dan. vi. 10. “This example is worth the noting, of praying three

times a day, because, we easily forget this duty, unless every one of us, prescribe to ourselves certain hours for Prayer." From all which it is apparent, that he looked upon set hours for public divine service, as appointed by God; and that he also thought the reason of it to be perpetual; because, if we be left to our liberty, we shall easily forget our duty; and perform that at no time, which we imagine may be done at any time, as well as at that which is appointed.

The benefit of which is this among others; that where there are no public assemblies, or men cannot, by reason of sickness, or other urgent cause, attend them, they may at those set times offer some short Prayer to God in private, and desire the public Prayers of the Church, where they are continually made, may be accepted with Him. By which means they are in some sort present there, and the Prayers they make in private become a part of the public; they praying as members of that body, which is then met together in the house of God. Thus *St. Peter* prayed privately, as

I observed above, at the sixth hour, when they were praying at the temple, and in Christian assemblies; and though alone at that time, yet he chose the same hours with theirs, that his Prayers might be joined with the rest, and not be single, but united desires.

Thus St. *Chrysostom* directs his people, in answer to those who objected unto his pressing arguments for attending the public Prayers, “How is it possible for a secular man engaged in business to pray at the three hours every day, and run to Church?” To which he replies in this manner, “Though it be not easy for every man to run to the Church so oft, yet it is easy for him, even when he is in public business to pray to God; unto which not so much the voice is requisite, as the mind. And therefore let no man excuse himself, by saying the house of Prayer, is not near to mine, for if we be watchful, the grace of the Holy Spirit, will make every one of us a temple of God. She that sits at the spindle, may look up to heaven in her thoughts, and call upon God with fervent desires; and so

Hom. iv. de
Anna, Tom, 2

may he that is in the market, or in a journey, or in his shop, making shoes; in like manner a servant, he that buys meat, he that dresses it, and all the rest; when it is not possible for them to come to church, they may, notwithstanding, make fervent and lively Prayers to God; Who doth not despise the place where they are made, but desires alone warm affections, and a serious composed mind." And he concludes thus,—“my meaning in all that I have said is, that we should go to church as oft as is possible; and when we cannot, pray at home in great quietness and tranquillity.”

Which counsel if we would all follow; that is, if as many as can would come to the house of God every day, and if they that cannot would let their hearts be there, what blessings might we not expect from God? What a flourishing Church and happy kingdom might we hope to see? And there are a great many people, I am sure, have leisure enough in all cities and towns, to fill the churches, where there are public Prayers; nothing but that sluggish dullness Mr. *Calvin* speaks of, is the

hindrance ; which if men would shake off, and awaken themselves to serious thoughts of God, and the need they have of Him, and of constant Prayer to Him, and such like things as I have represented, there would be public Prayers, where now there are none ; and men would crowd every day into the house of God (where there are) to worship Him, and give Him thanks, and beseech Him to be gracious to them. As for them whose condition and business is such that they cannot possibly attend them ; nothing can hinder them but their own wills, from going thither in their minds, with serious thoughts, and hearty affections, intreating the Father of mercies to hear the Prayers of those who are thus assembled, and to pour down His blessings on such as cannot, but would be with them.

And all this it becomes us to do in the humblest manner, according to the invitation and direction of the Psalmist, which is recited every day at morning Prayer, “O come, let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.”

The Christian Church hath never been acquainted with any other posture but this of *kneeling*, in their Prayers to God ; saving only between Easter and Whitsuntide, when in memory of Christ's resurrection they were wont to stand ; which was the common posture of Prayer among the Jews, except in the time of trouble and distress, when they also fell upon their knees, Dan. ix. 20. Nay, when they would express the greatest submission, lowliness, reverence, and fear, they fell upon their faces, as our Saviour did, just before His agony, Matt. xxvi. 39. *A posture far more remote from theirs, who sit at their Prayers ; which no man dare do, who is possessed with an awful sense of his distance from God, and considers how mean a creature he is, and how unworthy to receive the smallest favour from His hands.* In short, we may say to such men, as *Malachi* doth to those who brought vile offerings unto the altar, with a little alteration, "Go now to thy Governor and petition Him in this posture. Will he be pleased with thee, or accept of thy person ?" No man

hath the face to present himself unto his prince in this saucy manner; especially when he comes to beg mercy of him, and pray him to spare his life, which he hath forfeited to him. And therefore let none of us venture to approach thus, into the presence of the great King over all the earth, the Sovereign of the world; but cast down ourselves with such lowly reverence before Him, as may testify that we worship the Most High. It is not to be expected indeed that a man should bow his knees to God, when he is lame of the gout, or lies sick of a fever, or some other disease, but setting such cases aside, bending of the knees is necessary, saith *Origen* (whose words these are,) when a man comes to accuse himself of his sins to God, and humbly to ask pardon for them, and to desire to be cured of them. Nature inclines us to it, if we have any sense of our condition, though we had no instructions about it, no examples to move us to it. And therefore I may truly say, that we divest ourselves even of humanity, when we are so rude, as to sit at Prayer, un-

less we be in such a condition, as not to be able either to fall on our knees, or stand before the divine Majesty. Then indeed we may be confident he will not reject our prayers, whatsoever the posture of the body be; but hear them as He did *St. Paul*, "when he prayed and praised God in prison, with his feet in the stocks;" and *Hezekiah*, who lay on his bed by reason of his infirmity, and cried to Him; and the thief, who prayed as he hung on the cross, and found favour with Him. They are the words of *St. Chrysostom* in the place now named.

I will conclude this chapter with the judgment of *Mr. Calvin*, who expressly determines, "That the precepts of praying always, and without ceasing, have not respect to our own private

L. iii. Institut.
c. xx. sect. 29.

Prayers only; but to the public Prayers of the Church also. With which he that refuseth to join, we may conclude him, not to know what it is to pray alone, either secretly or at home. As on the other side, he that neglects to pray alone and privately, may be thought to put up vain Prayers,

though he frequent the public assemblies, because he respects more the opinion of men than the secret judgment of God. In the mean time, lest the common Prayers of the Church should fall into contempt, God hath adorned them with splendid elogies: especially when He calls the temple, 'a house of Prayer,' Isa. lvi. 7. For by this speech He instructs us that the principal part of His worship, is the office of Prayer, in which that the faithful might exercise themselves with one consent, the temple was erected and lifted up to them like a banner, that they might all resort unto it, Psal. lxxv. 2. Where there is also a famous promise added, ver. 1. 'Praise expecteth Thee, O God in Sion: and unto Thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem. In which words the prophet admonishes, that the Prayers of the Church are never in vain; because God perpetually administers to His people matter of singing His praise with joy."

Which things if they were well weighed, they would be sufficient to stir up the zeal of those who now languish, and have no con-

cern at all for the public exercise of our religion. Especially if they would observe and mark, *first*, with what earnest longings holy men desired to come to the public assemblies, when by any impediment they were kept from them; read Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2. &c., and David's passionate breathings, xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord," &c. And *second*, with what joyful hearts, they received all invitations to them; Psal. cxxii. 1, 2. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."



CHAPTER XX.

SOME OBJECTIONS REMOVED.

WHEN I reflect upon the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, I cannot but fear that they are void of the love of God, or very defective in it, who have so little regard to His honour, as not to love the place where His “honour dwelleth,” and where “praise waiteth for Him;” as the Psalmist speaks, in the place now named, that is, where His glorious majesty is extolled, His wonderful works are magnified; His benefits acknowledged; and psalms sung in honour of Him; which is the greatest business of our solemn assemblies. For men hear nothing more willingly than the praises of their parents; there they delight to be, and are never weary of their attendance there, where the noble acts of their ancestors are recited, with songs or speeches in their commendation.

And therefore with much more diligence should we run thither, without ceasing; "Where men speak of the glorious honour of His majesty, and of the wondrous works of our heavenly Father:" and declare the love of our blessed Saviour, "making known His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom; uttering abundantly the memory of His great goodness, and singing of His righteousness." Though alas! "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can shew forth all His praise?" As the Psalmist speaks elsewhere. His benefits towards us are immensely great, and cannot worthily be praised by us, but it is our duty to do what we can, that we may pursue what we ought. And therefore, if we have any respect to God, let us say and sing again, with the Psalmist, nay, with our Saviour Christ, as I have before observed. "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him; all ye seed of Jacob glorify Him; and fear Him all ye seed of Israel. My praise shall be of Thee in the

great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear Him." Psal. xxii. 22, 23, 25. "I will praise Thee, O God, among the people: I will sing unto Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds," Psal. lvii. 9, 10. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee." Psal. lxxxiv. 4. "The dead praise not the Lord; neither any that go down into Thy silence. But we will bless the Lord, from this time forth, and for evermore. Praise the Lord." Psal. cxv. 17, 18.

Which last words teach us, that this is a piece of public service we do to God in this world, which we are incapable to perform, when we are gone from hence. Then the time is past of honouring God among men, by declaring the sense we have of His greatness, and speaking good of His name. For though the dead are not quite silent; yet what they say or do, signifies nothing to us in this world, where we must serve God while we live, or else not at all.

Which is a new consideration to quicken us

to this duty, and to silence all those objections which are apt to rise in our hearts against it.

Yes, may some say, we like the thing you press, but are against the way of doing it, in this Church. In which some are distasted at all forms of Prayer; and others at that form, wherein we worship God, and Him alone.

Unto the first of these, I have this to say; that when there were no forms of Prayer left in this Church, they that destroyed them did not *daily* hold public assemblies, nor do they now make it their constant practice. Which gives us too much cause to think, they have not such a sense, as is to be wished, of their necessity. But, to let that pass, supposing some have, and that they only dislike a form of Prayer, it is something strange, that the same arguments which make them think daily public assemblies to be needful, should not also reconcile them to a form of Prayer. Which was constantly used by the ancient Jews in their assemblies, as hath been undeniably proved by many of our writers; and was pre-

scribed by our blessed Lord and Master, who made His Prayer, I have shown, for the public service, in which He joined with the Jews when He was at the temple in Jerusalem; and when He was in the country, went to the Synagogues; which the Chaldee paraphrast calls "Houses of Praise."

In Isa. vii. 19.

And so did His apostles, who themselves used a constant form of praise; for they rested not day and night saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Rev. iv. 8. This, as I showed before, was their continual hymn, which they offered to God; and it appears by *St. Paul's* usual way of recommending the Churches to whom he wrote, unto the grace of God, that they had their forms of Prayer also. For he himself constantly used these words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all." 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18.

The same power every bishop had in his Church, to compose Prayers for the necessities of it, as we may gather from 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. Which exhortation is directed not to the peo-

ple, but to *Timothy*, who was to take care to have all men recommended unto God in the public offices, by Prayers and Supplications, with Intercessions and Thanksgivings; for Kings especially, and for all in authority, &c. This could not be done orderly (as all things were to be in the Christian Church) without a set form of words; which *Timothy*, we may well think, composed. For those words "that Prayers be made," signify as literally the apostle would have Prayers and Supplications composed, as that he would have them put up to God. And I doubt not they signify both; first, that they should be composed, and then put up to God by the Church.

For you may observe farther that the apostles speak of this as their work, Acts vi. 4. where having bidden the Church look out some men to be appointed to attend the business of providing for the poor, they add; "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." They made the Prayers where they were present, as much as they ministered the Word. Which is far-

ther manifest from hence, that the Prayers of the Church of Jerusalem are called the Apostles' Prayers : Acts ii. 42. " And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Observe here how all the faithful stedfastly continued in Prayers, as well as hearing the Word. And that they are, first, called Prayers, in the plural number ; not one, but many Prayers, and then, that they are called the apostles' prayers ; Prayers made by them. For the word apostles in the beginning belongs to all the three things that follow, as well as to the first. To the apostles' fellowship, and their breaking of bread, and their Prayers, as well as to their doctrine.

To be brief, as John Baptist, being a public minister sent of God, taught his disciples how to pray, and our Blessed Lord taught His apostles ; so His apostles in like manner taught those whom they converted, according to the pattern Christ had left them ; and no quest n delivered the same power to those that should have the supreme guidance, direction, and

government of the Church, to compose Prayers suitable to men's necessities, in the several nations where they lived, and over whom they presided.

It may be thought indeed that the extraordinary gift they had in those days supplied all. But it is manifest, both that every one had not that extraordinary gift of Prayer; and that they also who had, were to be so ordered and regulated in the exercise of it, by the governors of the Church, that it might serve its edification. And nothing tended more to the edification of the Church, than that it should have a standing known form of Prayers and praises (without which it could not be known how they worshipped God) and not depend merely upon that extraordinary gift; which was not constant, but vouchsafed only on some special occasion, according as God pleased to impart it. Which is not said arbitrarily by me, but it appears by a convincing argument, that this extraordinary gift was not intended to serve the constant necessities of the Church, but only some particular purposes; for they

who had it could not make others understand it, and are therefore directed by the apostle to pray they might be able to interpret, that others might reap some benefit thereby, and be able to say "*Amen*" thereunto. 1 Corinth. xiv. 13, 14, 15, 16. Upon which words St. *Chrysost* supposes they ended then their blessing in the spirit, with the very same form of words wherewith we now conclude our Doxologies, or giving Glory to God, viz. "For ever and ever;" or "throughout all ages, world without end," as we translate the apostles' words, Eph. iii. 21. And *Peter Martyr* thought he had reason to acknowledge as much. For upon the forenamed place, 1 Cor. xiv. 16. he hath this observation. "From hence we learn, that even in those first times the public Prayers were wont to be concluded, with these words 'secula seculorum,' world without end."

And this place of the apostle puts me in mind of another undeniable argument for prescribed forms of worship in the Christian Church: which is, that singing psalms and hymns made up a great part of that worship,

and could not possibly be performed by the whole congregation, unless they had before them that which was to be sung. Therefore singing by the spirit, that is, by a spiritual gift, the apostle makes small account of, unless what was sung were put into such words, that all the people might understand it, and sing God's praises together with him that was inspired. This is the apostle's meaning, when he bids them speak among themselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their heart to the Lord. Eph. v. 19. Where by *psalms* I think all agree are meant the Psalms of David; which were a constant set form of praise; hymns and spiritual songs were the compositions, it is like, of inspired persons then in the Church; which could not be sung by all, unless they were communicated to the whole company; and then they were a form also, and we may well think were sung more than once, it being very reasonable to conceive, that they had not, every time they met, a new hymn, no more than a new psalm. For St. *Paul* blames it as

a confused, unedifying thing, that when they came together (met, that is, in the public assemblies) every one had his particular psalm, 1 Corinth. xiv. 26 ; and commands all " things should be done to edifying," by making the psalm *common*, that is, so that all might be the better for it. Such, I persuade myself, were the prayers and hymns which St. *Paul* and *Silas* sung in prison ; not each of them their own private prayer, and hymn, but some common prayer, and form of praise, which they were wont to use. Acts xvi. 25.

Such hymns it is certain there were in the Church, which were sung every morning in praise of our blessed Saviour ; as *Pliny* himself testifies. And *Eusebius* produces an ancient writer asserting the divinity of our Saviour, out of the hymns that had been of old used in the Church acknowledging His Divinity. And that writer calls them " Psalms and Hymns written by the faithful from the beginning," which celebrated Christ the Word of God, as God indeed. The most ancient of all, which was the doxology

Eccles. Hist.
L. v. cap. 28.

we still use, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, together with the Holy Ghost:" as St. *Basil*, (or whosoever was the author of the book "Concerning the Holy Spirit") reports. Where he saith, that thus it run before the Arian times. After which, to shew that the Church meant in those words to ascribe equal glory unto the Holy Ghost, with the Father and the Son, it was altered into that form wherein it now continues, not *with* the Holy Ghost, but *to* the Holy Ghost. Which is the very same, as to the sense, there being no real difference whether we say, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and *to* the Holy Ghost;" or "Glory be to them, *with* the Holy Ghost:" but to avoid all suspicion of any distinction, which the Church made between them, the form, as it is now, was thought better. And, so ancient and universal was this form of doxology, that the Arians themselves used one very like to it, giving "Honour and glory to the Father, by His only begotten Son, in the Holy Ghost;" as the same writer informs

Ad Amphi-
lochium. cap.
27. 29.

Cap. 25.

us. Which originally had the same meaning with the other, till they perverted it, signifying as much as we say now (in our communion service) when we pray for the pardon of our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord, "By Whom, and with Whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto Thee, O Father Almighty, world without end." I will not trouble the reader with any more of the ancient hymns, but only note, that even in the book of the Revelation we read not only of the "Song of Moses," but of "the song of the Lamb:" the latter of which was as much a set form, as the former, and is there recorded. Rev. xv. 3, 4. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou king of saints. Who would not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy."

And what hath been said of hymns, may be as truly said of Prayers; that the Church had from the beginning a form of divine service; which *Justin Martyr* calls "*common Prayers*;" and in *Ignatius* (nearer to the Apos-

tle's time) is called "the *common Supplication.*" Which we cannot well think was any other, than such as he or some other apostolical man prescribed. In *Origen* they are called the prescribed or ordained Prayers; regular petitions, which they who used were safe, he saith, from all the power of the devil. And as the hymn they sung to Christ, was so celebrated, that the Pagans took notice of it (as I observed before) so these forms of Prayer were so well known to them, that they got some scraps of them. For we find these words, "Lord have mercy upon us," in *Arrianus*, In Epictetum. a pagan philosopher, who lived about the same time with *Justin Martyr*, the next age to the apostles.

It is superfluous to add, that the Emperor *Constantine* was wont to say with his whole court, (as *Eusebius* calls them) the L. iv. de vita
Constaut. c. 17. "appointed Prayers:" and delivered a form of Prayer to his army to be constantly used by the soldiers: which *Eusebius* also hath set down in his life. Let me only note,

by the way, to quicken the reader
 to this holy duty, that as this reli-
 gious prince had daily Prayers in his palace,
 which he frequented with his courtiers : making
 it a house of God ; so he had like-
 wise certain hours, wherein he con-
 stantly retired to pray by himself.

Ib. cap. 20.

Ib. cap. 22.

As for following ages, we find frequent men-
 tion of liturgies formed by the apostles them-
 selves ; particularly by *St. James*. Unto
 which though some additions perhaps had
 been then made, as there have been more
 since, yet it is hard to think that a great num-
 ber of bishops would have owned a liturgy, as
 composed by *St. James*, if there had not been
 a constant tradition among them, that the apos-
 tles left some stated form of Prayer and Praise,
 in the Churches which they governed.

But what need I trouble myself with a long
 proof of this matter, when we have the confes-
 sion of the most learned and best men among
 those, whom they that dissent from us have
 been wont to reverence, that there hath been
 no time wherein there was not a prescribed

form of divine service? Let Dr. *Preston* speak for all, in a book of his much prized in former times: where after he had owned that Christ prescribed a form, &c., he adds, “ And in the Church, at all times, both in the primitive times, and all along to the beginning of the reformed times, to Luther and Calvin’s time, still in all times the Church had set forms they used, and I know no objection of weight against it.”

And in answer to that common objection, which he calls the main one, that in stinted Prayer the Spirit is straightened, and limited, &c. He answers as we do now; that “ even those men that use this reason, do the same daily in the congregation, for when another prays, that is a set form to him that hears it;” and therefore if that were a sufficient reason (that a man might not use a set form, because the spirit is straightened) he should not hear another pray at all (though it be a conceived Prayer) because in that case, his spirit is limited to what that man saith. And very judiciously adds, that “ it is not a bond or re-

straint of the spirit, because there is a tie of words ; for the largeness of the heart standeth not so much in the multitude and variety of expressions, as in the extent of affection." And at last concludes, " That a set form of prayer must be used."

Would to God they that scruple it would weigh such things as these, it would not be long then, before they liked, nay loved that form of prayer which is used in this Church.

For it is so exactly conformable to the rule of the holy apostle, which I have often mentioned, 1 Tim. ii. 1., consisting of unexceptionable " Prayers, supplications, intercessions, and thanksgivings," that one cannot but think the composers of it laid that rule before them, when they framed it. It would be too long to give an account of the whole book, which it is easy to shew is made up of those four parts of divine service. Look only into the Litany, which is a word signifying properly a supplication for the turning away of evil things, with which it begins, and then proceeds to Prayers, and to Intercessions, having in the end, a general

form of Thanksgiving. And observe the admirable method of it.

It directs our Prayers to the ever blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: the only object of worship, and fountain of mercy. Of Whom we first deprecate evil things, and that in the right order; first desiring to be delivered from the evil of sin, both of the spirit and of the flesh; and then from the evil of punishment, whether in outward, or in inward judgments. All this we pray to be delivered from, by what Christ hath done and suffered for us, and by that alone; which is the most prevalent way of suing for mercy. And by the way observe, that what some, through misunderstanding, I hope, have been pleased to make the subject of their mirth and sport, is really, and ought to be esteemed, the most serious and effectual supplication that can be made to our Lord. "By whose holy nativity, and circumcision; by His baptism, fasting, and temptation: by His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, by His glorious resurrection and

ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost," we pray to be delivered. For thus it is our Lord having humbled himself to be a man for our sakes, nay to take on him the form of a servant, and, after all His other sufferings, at last to die the death of the cross for us, is gone, with that blood which was there shed, into the heavens, and is exalted at God's right hand in the high and holy place; where He represents all that He did and suffered, from His coming into the world till His going out of it, before God; and in the virtue of His bloody sacrifice, which He made of Himself, pleads to have every thing from God, which he hath promised, and cannot be denied. Now for us to beseech Him, that through the force of His sufferings of all sorts, especially of His cruel death, and the glory that followed, we may be delivered and saved from all evil, is the most pathetic, the most powerful way of intreaty, and the most prevailing importunity, that can be used. It is as if we should say, Lord shew unto the Father what Thou hast endured for us, represent unto Him thy obedience unto

death ; which He promised to reward with all power in heaven and in earth, exercise Thy royal power which Thou hast obtained by that humble obedience, for our deliverance and salvation. As thou hast received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and imparted it to Thy apostles, so pour it down more and more upon us also ; who believe the gospel which they preached and testified to be the truth.

Then follow petitions for all good things : first, for the universal Church ; then for our own in particular. For the king, and royal family ; for all in authority under him ; for all sorts of persons ; and for all sorts of blessings, both for soul and body. Be at the pains, I beseech you, to read and consider it, with such observations as these, and it alone will be sufficient to make you in love with the rest of the book of Common Prayer. A book “ so fully perfected according to the rules of our Christian religion, in every behalf ; that no Christian conscience (in the opi-

Dr. Taylor, Rec-
tor of Hadley.

whose words these are) could be offended with anything therein contained.”

And therefore I conclude that as it would have been a great sin in the church of Ephesus, if they had disliked and rejected that way of “supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings, wherein *Timothy* led them to serve God, so it will be still in us, if we refuse those directions which are given us in the divine service, by our spiritual governors; when it is manifest they guide us by the word of God, and the apostolical practice according to it.

If they had composed a divine service, wherein they required us to pray to angels, or to saints departed this life; or to supplicate God by their merits, and intercession, we should have had reason, therein not to have followed their guidance; because we and they have a superior direction, God’s holy word; which forbids such worship. But when no such Prayers are appointed, nothing ordered to be offered unto God, but what is perfectly agreeable to His holy word, we can make no apology for

ourselves, if we reject them merely because they are a prescribed form ; or because every direction about them, is not expressly required in the word of God. This is to affront the whole Christian Church from the beginning ; this is to throw off all subjection to spiritual pastors ; whom the Holy Ghost hath commanded us to obey.

Not indeed with an illimited obedience, with an absolute assent to whatsoever they shall propose, without any examination of their injunctions ; or any appeal ; for this were to take away all the authority of God's word, and to erect the present authority of the Church above it ; which is the extreme into which they of the Church of Rome are run. But we ought to take care that out of eagerness to avoid that extreme, we do not fall into another ; as they do who affirm that spiritual pastors must only then be obeyed when they determine and give direction out of the express laws of God. For as the former take away all authority from God's word, so this takes away all authority from God's ministers, and de-

prives them of that obedience, by which God's word is due unto them.

An excellent divine of our Church hath largely treated of this, long ago ; shewing that since God in His holy word gives them in express terms, some spiritual authority, and right, to exact some obedience, peculiarly due to them from their flock ; it must be in things not enjoined by the express word of God, but only not forbidden thereby. For if they be then only to be obeyed when they produce the express command of God in scripture, for that particular thing, unto which they require obedience, there is no more obedience performed unto them, than unto any other man whatsoever. For there is no man so mean, but if he can shew us the express command of God for what he says, it must be obeyed of all. But when it is thus obeyed, it is that command of God only, not he that shewed it to us, which is obeyed. And if this be all the obedience we owe to our governors, they are as much bound to obey us as we to obey them. The people owe no more obedience to

Dr. Jackson
upon the Creed,
Book 2. chap. 4,
&c.

their pastors, than those pastors owe to their people.

If neither of these extremes then be true ; it remains that we owe, though not an absolute, unlimited, yet a conditional and cautionary obedience unto spiritual pastors ; who have a general warrant, expressly contained in scripture, to require obedience from their people, and therefore ought to be obeyed, though their people see not an express word of scripture to authorize every particular, wherein they require obedience ; provided, they require obedience to nothing expressly condemned in scripture. Disobedience to them in such things is as dangerous, as blind obedience is in matters plainly unlawful. For as the latter is the mother of superstition and idolatry ; so the former is the mother of schisms, presumption, carnal security, and infidelity.

Which rocks cannot be avoided, but by a due submission to the guides of souls, in things wherein God hath not plainly ordered the contrary. And therefore, if any have been so unhappy as by their education, to have imbibed

a dislike to such a way of worship as they prescribe, and to be possessed with fears it may not be the right way, though they cannot say wherein it contradicts God's holy word; these fears, and all such like things, are to be overbalanced and weighed down by the authority of spiritual guides and governors. Which is good for little if it cannot settle such doubts and scruples; over which it will prevail, if men consider that God commands us to obey them, and therefore their commandments are but particular branches of God's general commandment to give obedience to them. Insomuch that they who disobey them, disobey God, unless their commands be contrary to some other of the divine commandments, as plain as that which says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," &c. Heb. xiii. 17.

Which truths, if they were rooted in our hearts, and men had a just sense of such a thing as spiritual obedience to spiritual governors, they would rather like well of the things prescribed by them, for the sake of their author-

ity, by whom they are prescribed, than disobey their authority, upon the account of any private dislike, which they have to such prescriptions.

Make application of all this (which I have represented out of the forenamed author, in fewer words) to our own Church, and its worship, and governors; who have framed a divine service for us exactly conformable to the most ancient and pure patterns; with such care, with such circumspection, and conscientious regard to the directions the apostles have left us, that none of its enemies can find anything in it, as to the substance, which is not theirs. And therefore this may be justly called, in that regard as well as others, a truly apostolical, catholic Church. From which let no man withdraw himself; but dread the guilt of such a crime. That is, let him fear to withdraw himself from its public assemblies, from the common Prayers, and from obedience to its governors. For if any man be led from these, under the pretence of purer worship, unto separate meetings, managed by those who own not the authority of this Church's governors; it is

most certain he is not guided by the Spirit of Christ herein, but by the spirit of error and delusion.

Of which a very reverend person hath lately given this plain demonstration: that if men had such a measure of the spirit as makes them living members of the body of Christ, they could not but feel, what sensibly hurts that body; what palpably hinders the growth of it; what disgraces and reproaches it; what wounds it, nay hazards the very life and being of it. They that want this necessary sympathy, and sense of the common good of the body of Christ, and the interest of His kingdom, cannot justly pretend to any competent portion of His spirit. For what is more necessary for our preservation, than that we keep together in one body, under the same guides and governors; that we keep in the way which the Church of Christ hath always trod, and be not hurried into opinions and practices so unlike the truly ancient and apostolical Church, that we bear no resemblance to it? For that Church had

Preface to Paralipom; Prophetica.

ministers superior to the rest (as indeed the Jewish Church had) who governed, and ruled them, and the people ; it had forms of divine service, such as we now have ; the rejection of which is to expose us to contempt and loathing ; to harden men's hearts against a just reformation ; to make those who are reformed grow sick and weary and ashamed of the distracted unsettledness, and ungovernableness of such people ; who like nothing, but what is unlike to all the Churches of Christ that have been in the world, till this last unhappy age.

This cannot proceed from the blessed Spirit of grace ; which cannot lead men to destroy the Church which Christ hath purchased by His blood. Which, it is evident, cannot be preserved, much less promoted, but by a due regard to those who are over us in the Lord ; and by adhering closely to such an authentic constitution, as that of this Church, which is the genuine offspring of the apostles ; declaring nothing to the people, but the true sense of the ancient apostolic Church throughout the world. Which always had such governors, of

a superior order and degree to other ministers, as we have; such Prayers; such Hymns; in a word, such a face of religion, as is here seen in this our Church of England.

And may be seen, blessed be God, in other reformed Churches: particularly in those called Lutheran, who, as *Chemnitius* tells us, have had solemn Prayers every day: and much after the same order, that is observed in ours. His words are these, “the people assemble every day twice, at a certain hour, morning and evening, and after the singing of some psalms, lessons are read in order, partly out of the Old Testament, partly out of the New: and the assembly concludes always with *common Prayers*, and some hymn of thanksgivings. And besides the people come together every week, on some certain day, in greater multitudes; to make public and solemn supplications, which are called Litanies.” And so he proceeds to relate how “they worship God, with the greatest solemnity on the Lord’s days; and upon special festivals, in memory of the great bene-

Exam. Concil.
Trident. Pars,
iv. cap., ult.

fits we have received, on the nativity, circumcision, &c., in short, on all the days, now observed by our Church.

Oh, that there were such a heart in us, as instead of wrangling and disputing, seriously to set ourselves to make the best use we can, of such blessed opportunities, as God still affords unto us of meeting together every day for His worship and service ; especially upon Litany days, when there ought to be a fuller congregation, and more than ordinary devotion. One of those days, at least, I should think every devout Christian may easily see there is great cause to set apart every week for fasting and humiliation ; together with supplication and prayer to the divine Majesty, that He would turn away His anger from us.

Men are naturally too backward, I know, to such holy employments, and satisfy themselves that they have an excellent religion, which they highly value, without considering, that they have so much the greater obligation upon them, to join frequently in the holy offices thereof. Let that therefore, for a conclusion,

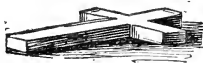
be added to all the motives I have used in this book, to stir you up to the constant performance of this duty, that it will be the greatest shame to us, if, when they whose religion is a false worship have their constant daily service, and attend upon it; we who have the truest notions of God, and the most excellent religion, have less regard unto it; by which means their religion, how corrupt soever it be, is upheld and maintained; and for want of this, ours, though never so pure, must needs fall to decay. For they that love the religion they profess, though it be not so sincere and perfect as it ought to be, yet never fail to reap all the benefits, which it is able to afford, and this among the rest, that they keep their religion, by their unfeigned love to it, and diligence in it. Whereas the best and soundest religion possessed by those who bear not the like affection to it, yields those who thus retain it, little or no benefit (as Mr. *Hooker* hath observed) and by degrees is lost, for want of a due regard, and earnest affection to it. We see this verified in Pagans, Turks, and Here-

tics; who zealously attend upon the public offices of their religion; and so continue their sect.

How comes their religion to lead them to have frequent assemblies, and ours to make us neglect them; but that they keep up their love to their religion, such as it is; and we have lost our first love, and so endanger the loss of our religion. For had we a sincere love to it, we should be led, by the natural dictates of it, to attend upon its public offices (that being the very first thing to which religion inclines us) and there to attend with all seriousness, both to the prayers and hymns, and to the holy Scriptures, which are then read unto us. And therefore our religion hath gone to decay, because we have not minded public assemblies daily: but where they are kept up, they are empty and thin; or when they are full, there are none of these natural signs of devotion, in too many people, which are among all nations, (bended knees, hands and eyes lifted up to heaven) nay, they do not attend to the Word of God there read, but pass it by, as

a tale that is told ; fancying, I suppose, it is never the Word of God, but when it is preached, that is, spoken without book.

These are not the faults of all, nor I hope of most among us ; but I have observed some of them (especially the last, of whispering together all the time the Scriptures are read, as if they were nothing but an empty sound) in so many persons, from whose understanding one would expect better things, that I could not but take notice of such unbecoming behaviour in the house of God. Where I beseech God to awaken all His ministers, to perform their duty with careful diligence. And all His people to accompany them reverently in continual Prayers and Supplications : to the glory of His great name, the credit of our holy religion, the honour of this Church, the increase of all true godliness and virtue among us ; and the furtherance thereby of our joyful account, and happy meeting in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen.



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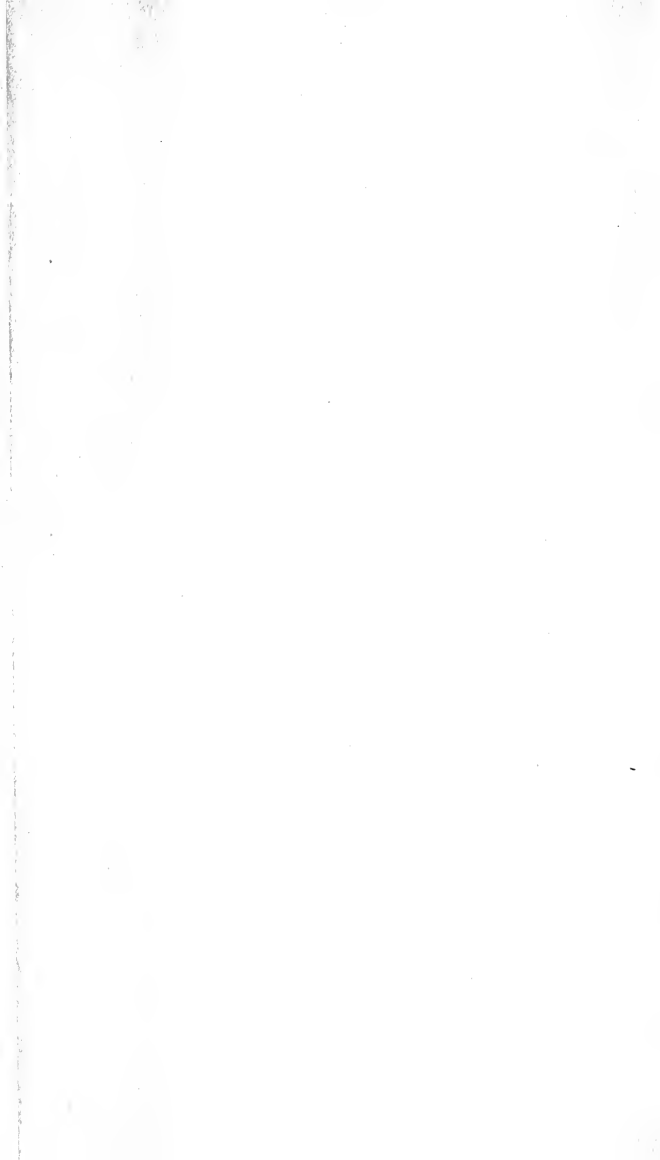
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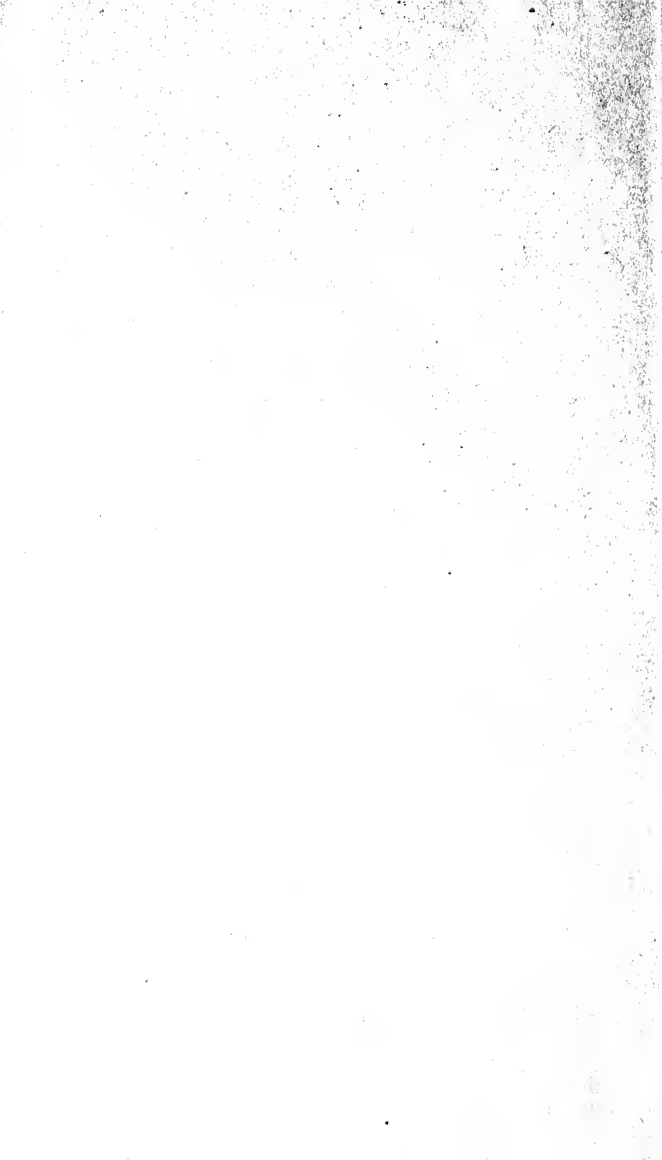
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